PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED

Brilliant autumn colour

from fiery foliage and late-season flowers

Make an edible bouquet

for family and friends

INTO THE WOODS

How to create a garden in a forest

THE BEST

outdoor firewood stores

SMALL WONDER

Big ideas for a tiny space

3 STYLISH IDEAS

for late autumn pots

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More than just a greenhouse

Editor's letter

At the turn of the last century, gardener Charles Jones photographed vegetables he had grown in a way that recognised their beauty, earthiness and painterly qualities. Using austere backgrounds and delicate attention to form and shading, Jones elevated turnips, beans, marrows and cauliflowers through studio portraiture. In this issue, gardener Bea Andrews offers a practical guide to using beautiful, ornamental vegetables to make an edible bouquet. Good, strong leaves of chard, chicory or endive, shrubby evergreen herbs in purple and green and freshly unearthed carrots or beets tied with a matching ribbon make a wonderful – and delicious – gift for family and friends.

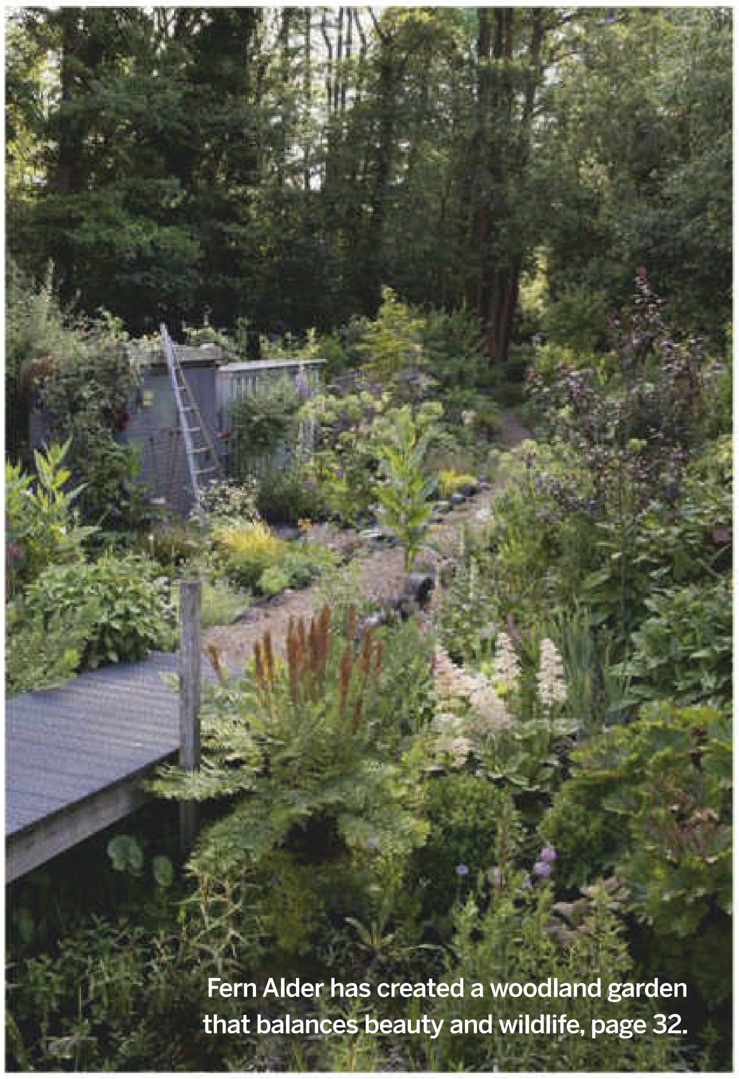
We also visit a garden in the depths of a woodland that was once coppiced to supply charcoal to the gunpowder industry. Today, willow, birch and alder thrive in black soil and ferns flourish underneath. Despite the owner's previous career as a designer of international show gardens, here the garden has been allowed to evolve incrementally, with a plants-first approach.

With dark nights and toasty fires in mind, we highlight the best outdoor wood stores for fires to warm cold hands after days working outside. From this month you can also sign up to *Gardens Illustrated*'s Kitted Out newsletter; a curated guide to the very best gardening kit sent straight to your inbox every two weeks.

I hope you enjoy the issue,

Lucy Bellamy

LUCY BELLAMY, EDITOR



Fern Alder has created a woodland garden that balances beauty and wildlife, page 32.

SARAH CUTTLE

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SIETSKE DE VRIES

In this clever Amsterdam garden, designer Erik Funneman has packed a small space with a fabulous array of planting, page 50.

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COVER IMAGE

Begonia 'Pink Twist' by Jason Ingram

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- Save money when you subscribe to the digital edition of *Gardens Illustrated* – page 30
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- Win a Ludlow shed from The Posh Shed Company, worth £1,820† – page 107

† Competition and reader offer available to UK readers only.

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info@lcgd.org.uk
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Contributors

EVA NEMETH

OBERTO GILI

Sarah Cuttle
Sarah photographs Fern Alder's woodland garden, page 32. *"Fern's garden, for me, is the future of gardening: sustainable, all about the wildlife and a complete joy to spend time in."*

Bea Andrews
Bea shows how to create a bouquet of edible plants, page 68. *"I love celebrating the end of a busy growing year with edible gift bouquets packed full of glorious autumn produce."*

Tania Compton
Tania visits Page Dickey's garden, page 72. *"Page is the sort of person who always puts a posy of flowers and a few carefully selected books on a bedside table. Church House exudes with her charm."*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

ANDREW MONTGOMERY

James Basson
James lives in the South of France where he runs Scape Design with his wife Helen, specialising in low-maintenance and dry gardens. He is a fervent advocate for creating sustainable landscapes. The winner of four Chelsea Gold medals, he was awarded Best in Show in 2017.

Fergus Garrett
Fergus was appointed head gardener at Great Dixter by Christopher Lloyd in 1993. He is passionate about passing on his knowledge through student programmes at Dixter and worldwide lectures. He was awarded an RHS Associate of Honour in 2008 and an RHS Victoria Medal of Honour in 2019.

Anna Pavord
Anna's books include her bestseller *The Tulip* and most recently *Landskipping*. For 30 years she was *The Independent*'s gardening correspondent. In 2000 the RHS awarded her the Veitch Memorial Medal. She lives and gardens in Dorset.

Dan Pearson
Dan is one of the UK's best-known garden designers, familiar to many through his gardening columns in the *Observer* magazine. Eight of his gardens, including the Tokachi Millennium Forest in Japan, have won awards and he was awarded Best in Show for his garden at Chelsea in 2015.

Sarah Price
Sarah is one of the UK's most sought-after garden designers who gained worldwide recognition for her designs for the 2012 London Olympic Park. She won Gold at Chelsea in 2012 and 2018, and was GMG Garden Columnist of the Year in 2016 for her design series in *Gardens Illustrated*.

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HOW TO GET IN TOUCH WITH US

Subscription enquiries and back issues

UK 03330 162114
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buysubscriptions.com/gardensillustrated
USA/CANADA GILcustserv@cdsfulfillment.com, britsubs.com/garden
UK/REST OF THE WORLD *Gardens Illustrated*, PO Box 3320,
3 Queensbridge, Northampton NN4 7BF.
USA/CANADA *Gardens Illustrated*, PO BOX 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495 USA.

Advertising enquiries

+44 (0)117 300 8805 heather.golden@immediate.co.uk

Editorial enquiries

+44 (0)117 300 8622 gardens@gardensillustrated.com
Gardens Illustrated, Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited,
Eagle House, Colston Avenue, Bristol BS1 4ST.

Syndication & Licensing

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+44 (0)117 300 8787 emma.brunt@immediate.co.uk

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MAGAZINE CONTACTS

EDITORIAL	
Editor	Lucy Bellamy
Contributing editors	James Basson, Fergus Garrett, Anna Pavord, Dan Pearson, Sarah Price
Deputy editor	Sorrel Everton
Art director	David Grenham
Deputy art editor	Niki Goss
Production editor	Juliet Giles
Digital editor	Daisy Bowie-Sell
Editorial assistant	Katie Dutton
Botanical adviser	Dr James Compton
ADVERTISING	
Group advertising manager	Laura Jones 0117 300 8509 laura.jones@immediate.co.uk
Advertising manager	Heather Golden 0117 300 8805 heather.golden@immediate.co.uk
Business development manager	Sophie North 0117 300 8804 sophie.north@immediate.co.uk
Brand sales executive	Phil Wallington 0117 300 8807 phil.wallington@immediate.co.uk
Classified sales executive	Elle Butcher 0117 300 8756 elle.butcher@immediate.co.uk
Advertising designer	Parvin Sepehr
INSERTS	
Laurence Robertson	+353 (0)876 902208
CIRCULATION, MARKETING, PRESS & PR	
Newstrade manager	Rob Brock
Subscriptions director	Jacky Perales-Morris
Direct marketing manager	Aimee Rhymer
Press officer	Dom Lobley dominic.lobley@immediate.co.uk
MANAGEMENT	
Chief executive officer	Tom Bureau
Managing director, Bristol	Andy Marshall
Managing director, specialist	Marie Davies
Promotions and partnerships manager, specialist	Rosa Sherwood
Publishing assistant	Lara Von Weber
SYNDICATION & LICENSING	
Director of licensing & syndication	Tim Hudson
PRODUCTION	
Production director	Sarah Powell
Production managers	Rose Griffiths, Louisa Molter
Junior production co-ordinator	Georgia Tolley

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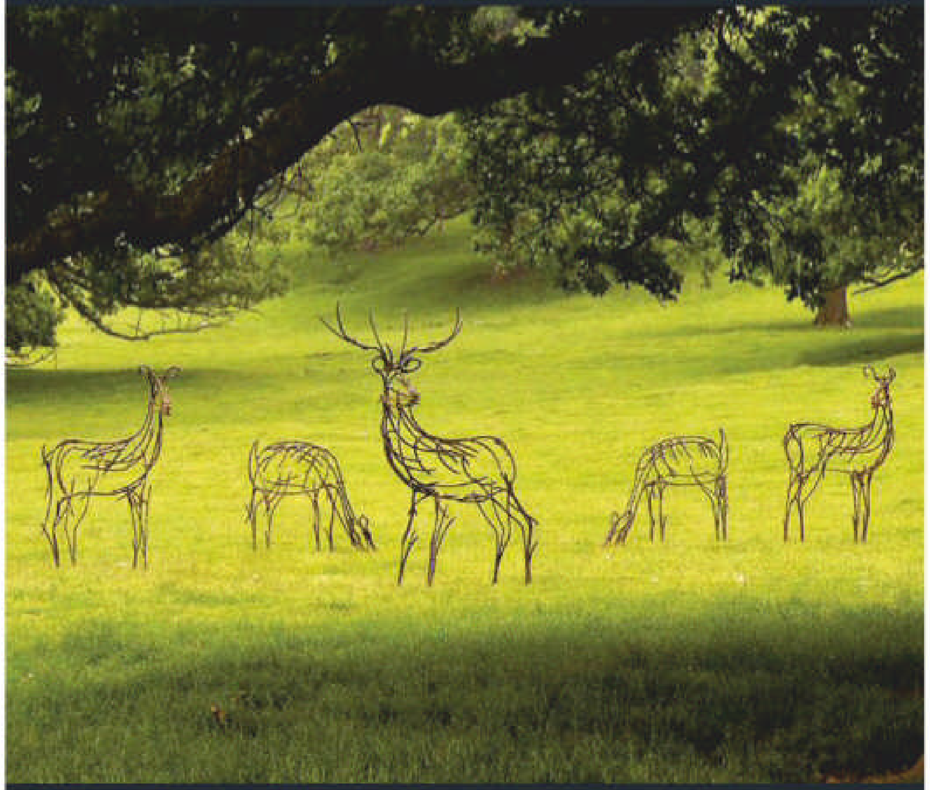

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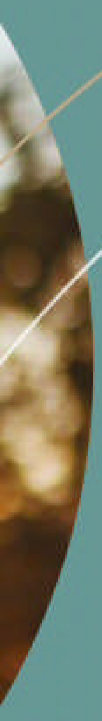

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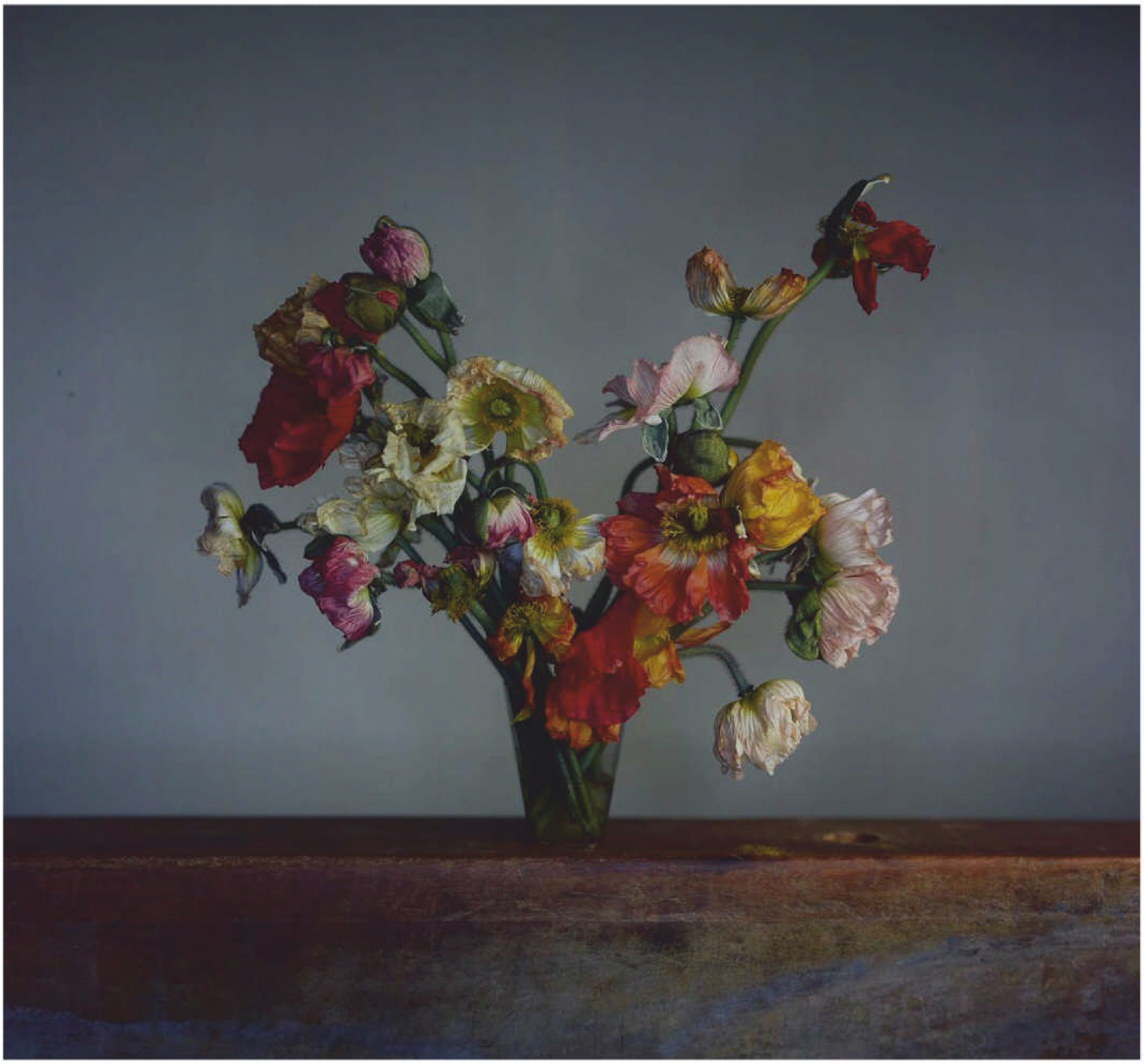
Dig in

What's happening, what's in flower and what to buy this month



RICHARD LEAROYD, *LARGE POPPIES*, 2019 © THE ARTIST. IMAGE COURTESY OF MICHAEL HOPPEN GALLERY.

Rooted in time

Dulwich Picture Gallery reopens this month with a fascinating exhibition that explores the history of photography through the subject of plants and botany. *Unearthed: Photography's Roots* is the gallery's first major photography exhibition and will include more than 100 images, many never exhibited before, from 35 international photographers. Arranged chronologically, with a focus on botany and science, the exhibition will highlight innovations from early pioneers, such as William Henry Fox Talbot, through works from 20th-century photographers including Imogen Cunningham to contemporary works from the likes of Richard Learoyd whose camera obscura still lifes, including his *Large Poppies*, 2019 (shown above), evoke the still life paintings of the Dutch golden age. The exhibition runs from 21 November 2020 until 9 May 2021. Tickets cost £16.50 and must be booked in advance. **dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk**

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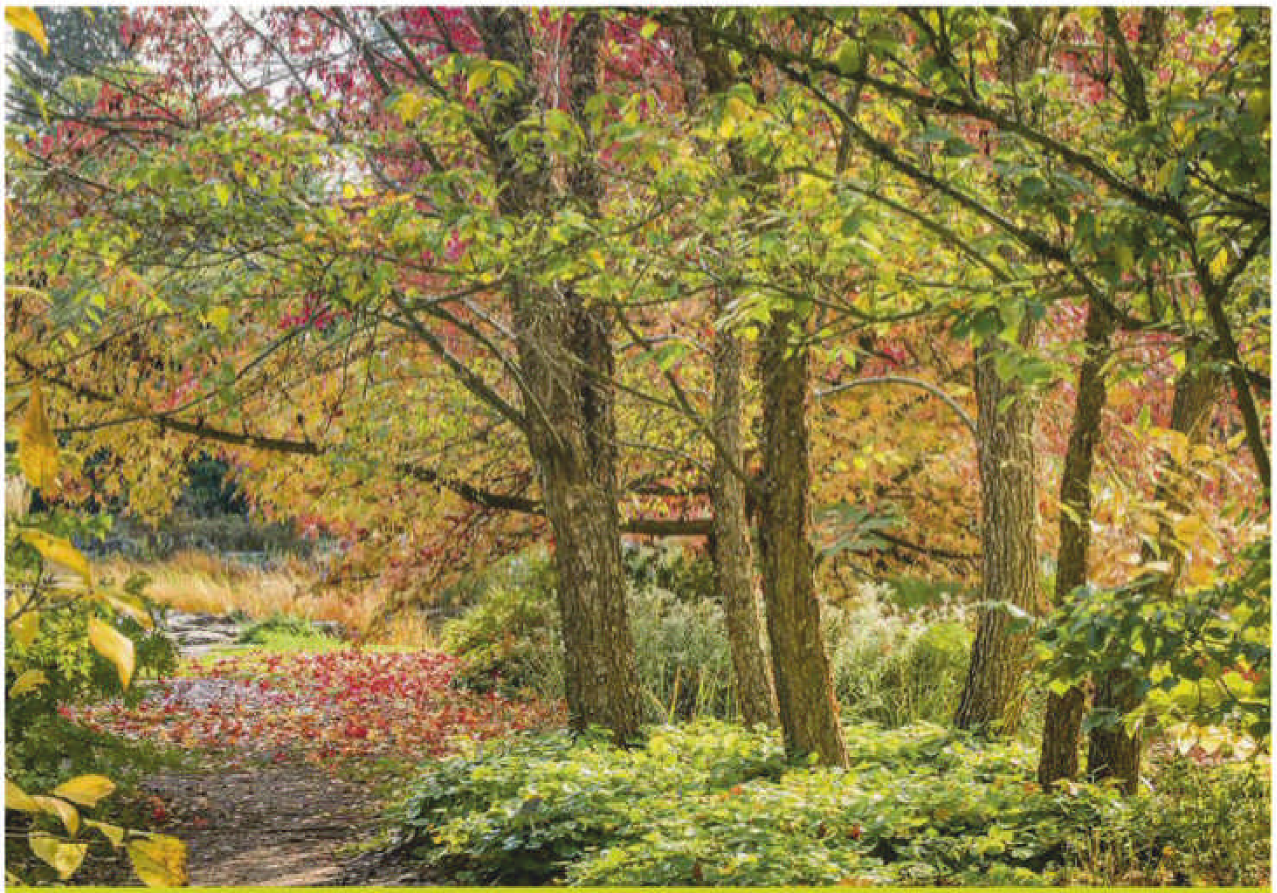
News

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

ECO-SAVVY SOIL

As a student of environmental geography, 20-year-old George Davies knows better than most why gardeners need to replace peat in their compost – its extraction is not only destroying vital habitats, it is also adding to climate change by releasing CO2 into the atmosphere. Now George has developed his own peat-free alternative for growing healthy, pest-free plants that uses coir, a sustainable by-product of the Sri Lankan coconut industry. For Peat's Sake comes in a light, dehydrated pack, and once you've added water each pack makes around 11.5 litres of growing medium. Packs cost £7 from ***forpeatssake.co.uk***



Guided by the experts

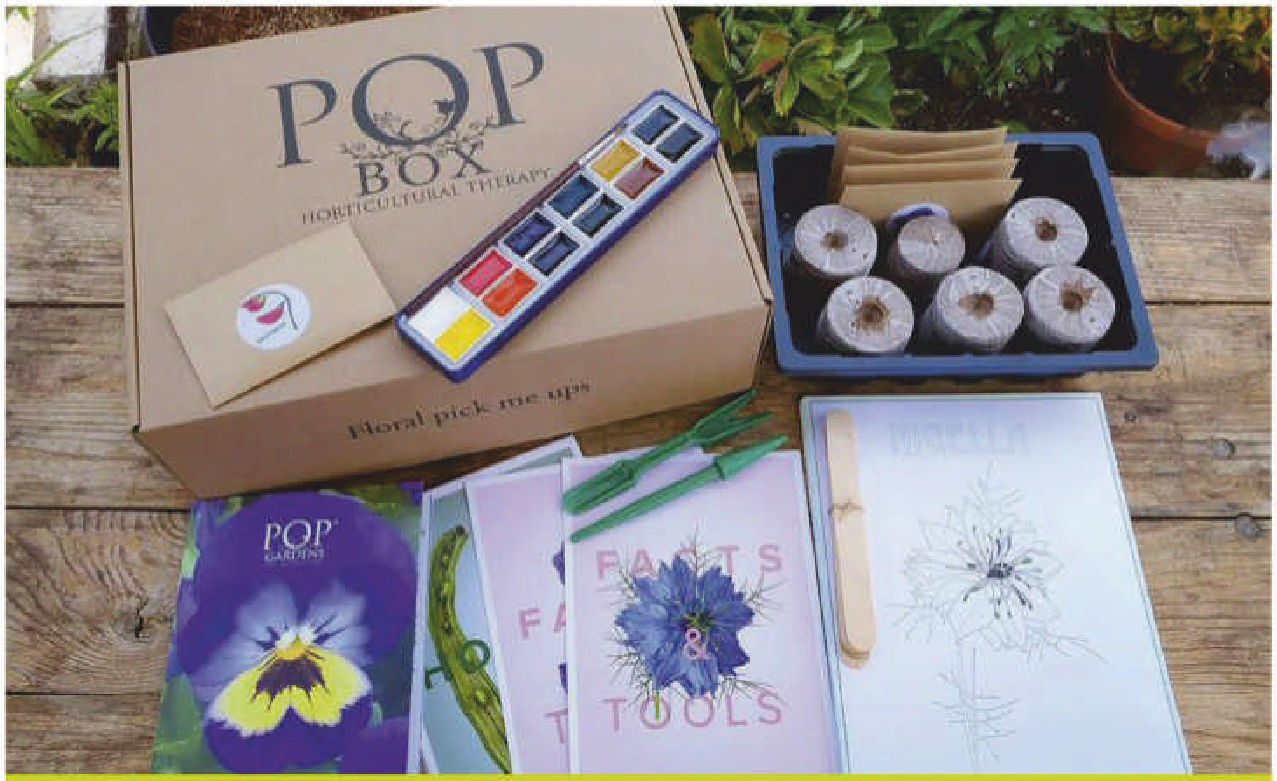
Whether you're fascinated by plant science or interested in getting the advice of a horticultural expert on what it takes to maintain a beautiful garden, Cambridge University Botanic Garden's new bespoke tours are a fabulous chance to satisfy your curiosity. Each behind-the-scenes tour lasts an hour and a half and will be led by either the garden's director, curator, head of horticulture or another senior member of the garden team, and will offer an exclusive insight into what is involved in supporting the garden's plant collection, as well as a chance to enjoy the beautiful gardens at their autumnal best in the company of a knowledgeable expert. Each tour costs £150 and can accommodate up to four people. **botanic.cam.ac.uk**

Dark edge

If you've been inspired by our winter container displays feature using succulents this month, then look out for *Echeveria pulvinata* 'Devotion', bred by Dutch nursery Javado. Recently named houseplant of the year by the UK garden trade show Glee, it offers fabulous dark-green foliage with a rich, burgundy edge that darkens as temperatures drop. Easy to care for, it needs very little water and is hardy to -10°C if kept dry, making it a great choice for outside pots and rockeries as well as a very handsome houseplant. Available from most UK garden centres from the beginning of November.

A podium for endangered plants

In February conservation charity Plant Heritage launched its Threatened Plant of the Year competition to showcase rare and beautiful cultivars that are not consistently sold commercially in the UK. The winning plant, chosen from a shortlist of 12, is the pretty pink *Clematis montana* var. *rubens* 'Veitch', bred by the famous Veitch nursery from seeds brought back from China by the plant hunter EH Wilson in the early 20th century. It was grown by the holder of the *Clematis montana* National Collection Val Le May Neville-Parry from Wiltshire, who was given the plant as a cutting in 2006. The public vote went to the stunning succulent *Aeonium* 'Bronze Teacup', grown by Shropshire-based Melanie Lewis who grows 97 *Aeonium* cultivars in her garden, greenhouse and conservatory. To find out more about Plant Heritage and its National Plant Collections visit **plantheritage.org.uk**



Pop art

Few things can lift the spirits as easily as gardening, except perhaps allowing your creativity to flow. This innovative activity box from horticultural therapy specialist PoP Gardens lets you do both by harnessing the therapeutic powers of gardening and art, even if you've never previously planted a seed or picked up a paintbrush. The box contains easy-to-grow seeds, 15 soil growing pods, propagation tools, a botanical water colouring set and more, all designed to help reduce stress and boost your creativity. The perfect Christmas gift for a frazzled fellow gardener, or maybe just a calming treat to keep yourself. The PoP Box costs £39.99 and is available from **popgardens.co.uk**

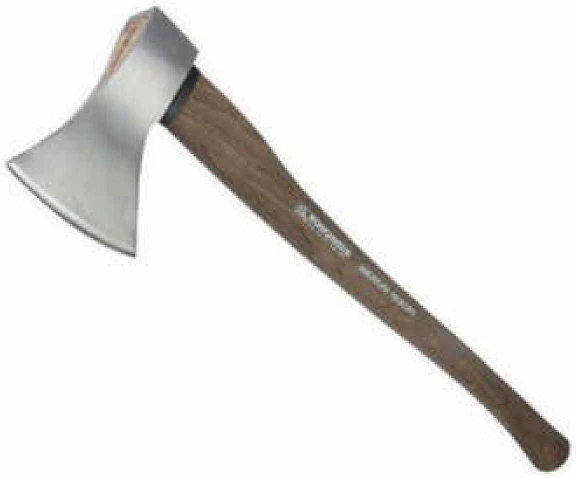
Small but perfectly formed

Make the most of a small garden or balcony with this new dwarf raspberry plant from Pomona Fruits. *Rubus idaeus* 'Yummy' is ideal for growing in a pot as it grows to only 45cm in height. Though small in stature, 'Yummy' produces a heavy crop, with generously sized, delicious, juicy berries (as you may have guessed from its name). It is a primocane raspberry bush, and has canes free of spines making the fruits easier to pick. A three-litre pot costs £17.95 from **pomonafruits.co.uk**

WINTER WARMER

Looking for something a little different to soak up the rich flavours of warming winter stews? This eye-catching white squash, Cucurbita pepo *'Mashed Potatoes', new to Dobies, bears more than a passing resemblance to its namesake when cooked and fluffed but is a tasty alternative to the ubiquitous spud. Best sown in a propagator on a windowsill in April or May for harvest in August to October. Six seeds cost £2.99 from* ***dobies.co.uk***

3 FOR THE GARDEN… *AXES*



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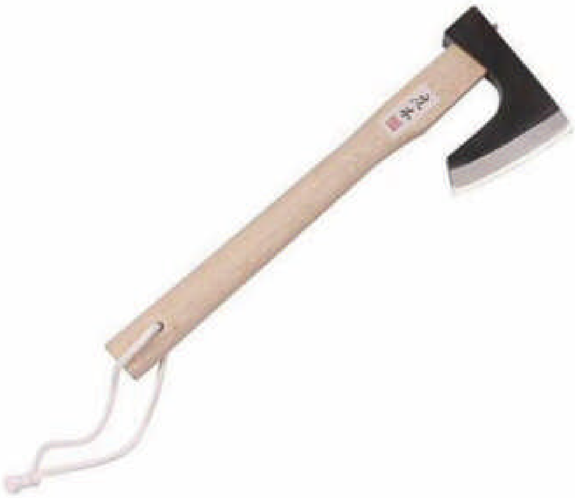

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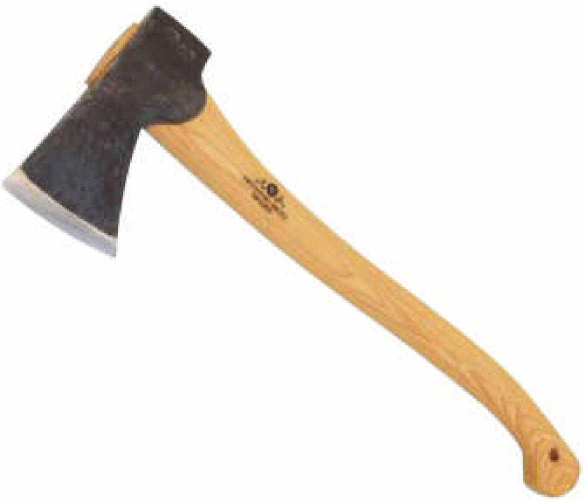

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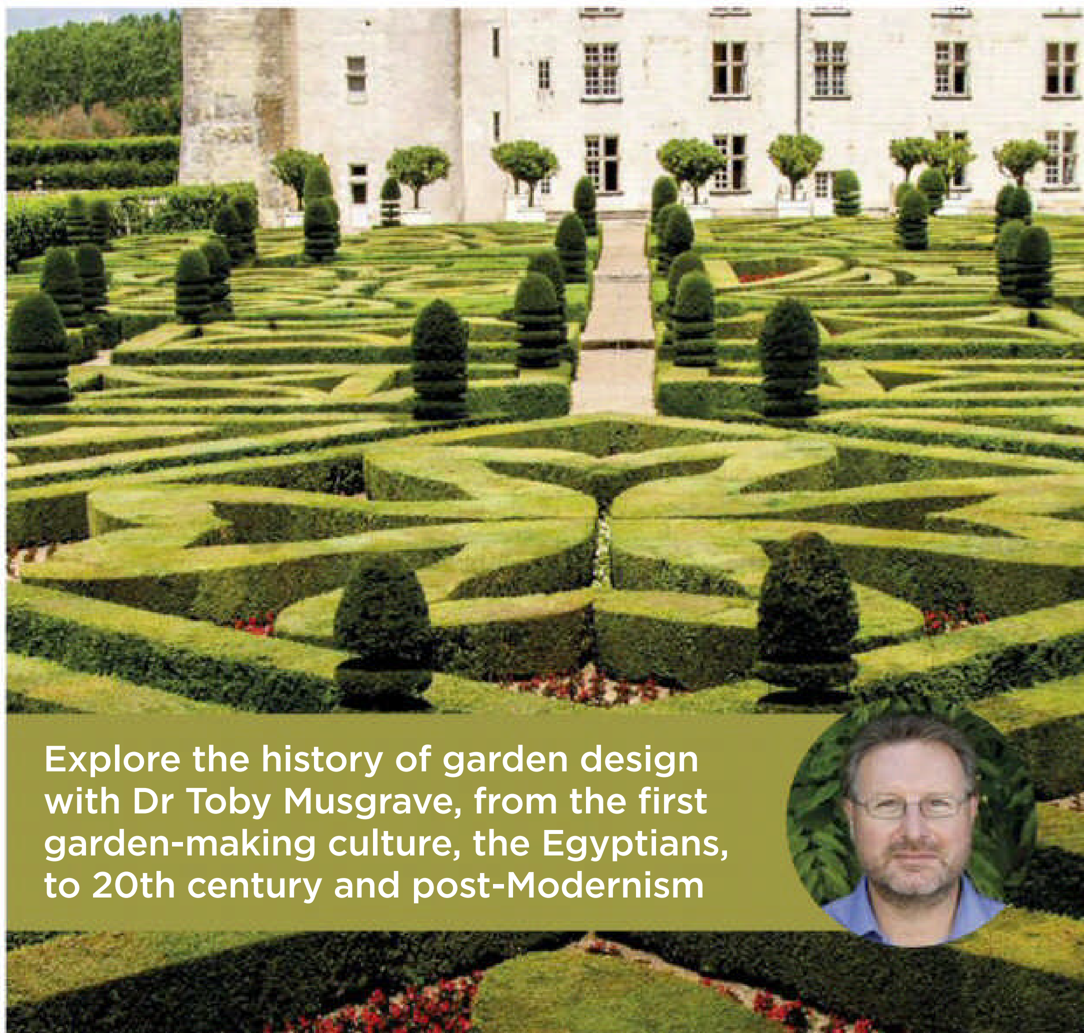

Explore the history of garden design with Dr Toby Musgrave, from the first garden-making culture, the Egyptians, to 20th century and post-Modernism

KITTED OUT

For the autumn garden

COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON

①
DONKEY WORKS

MAIN IMAGES STEVE SAYERS

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STIHL
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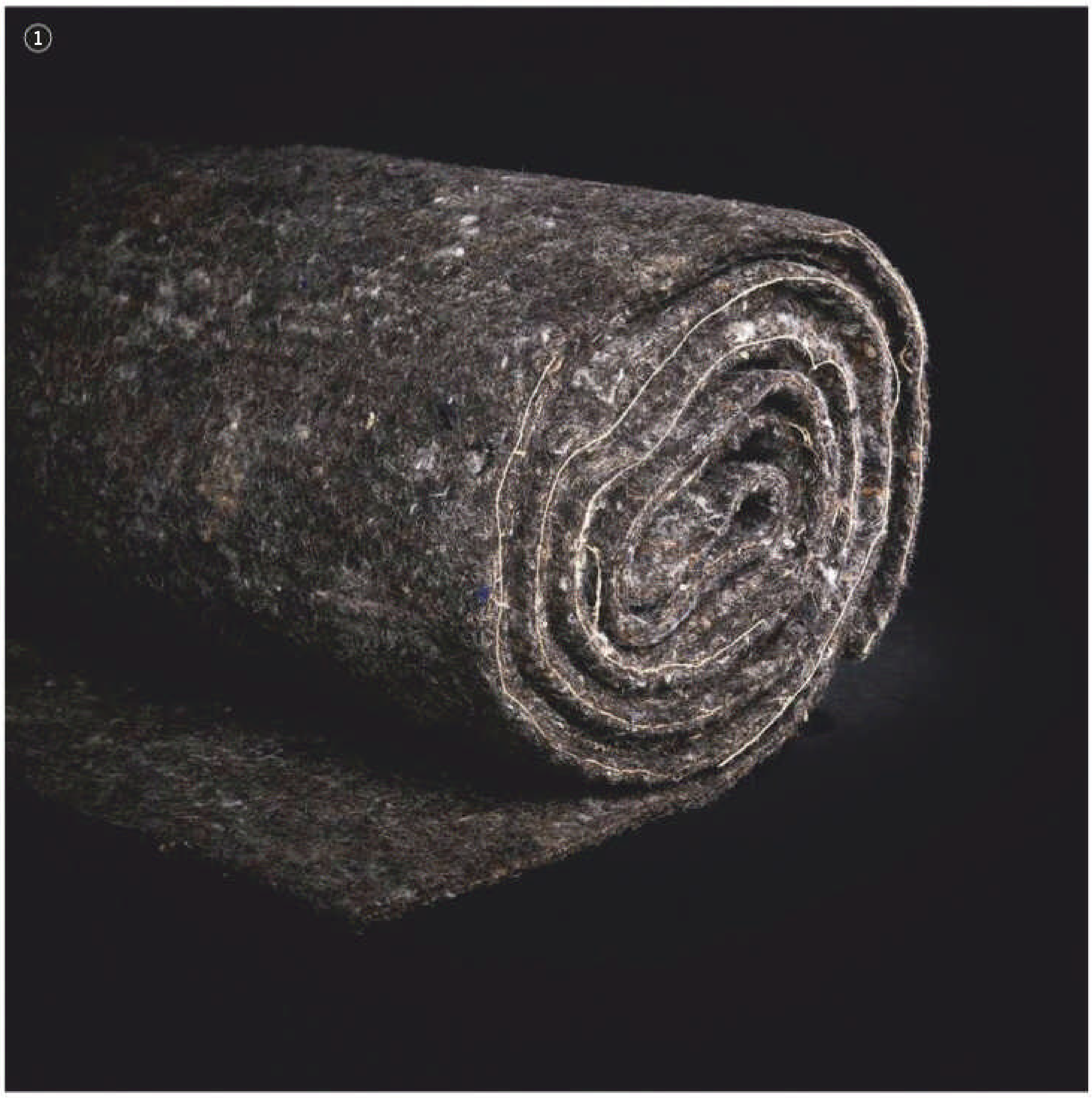

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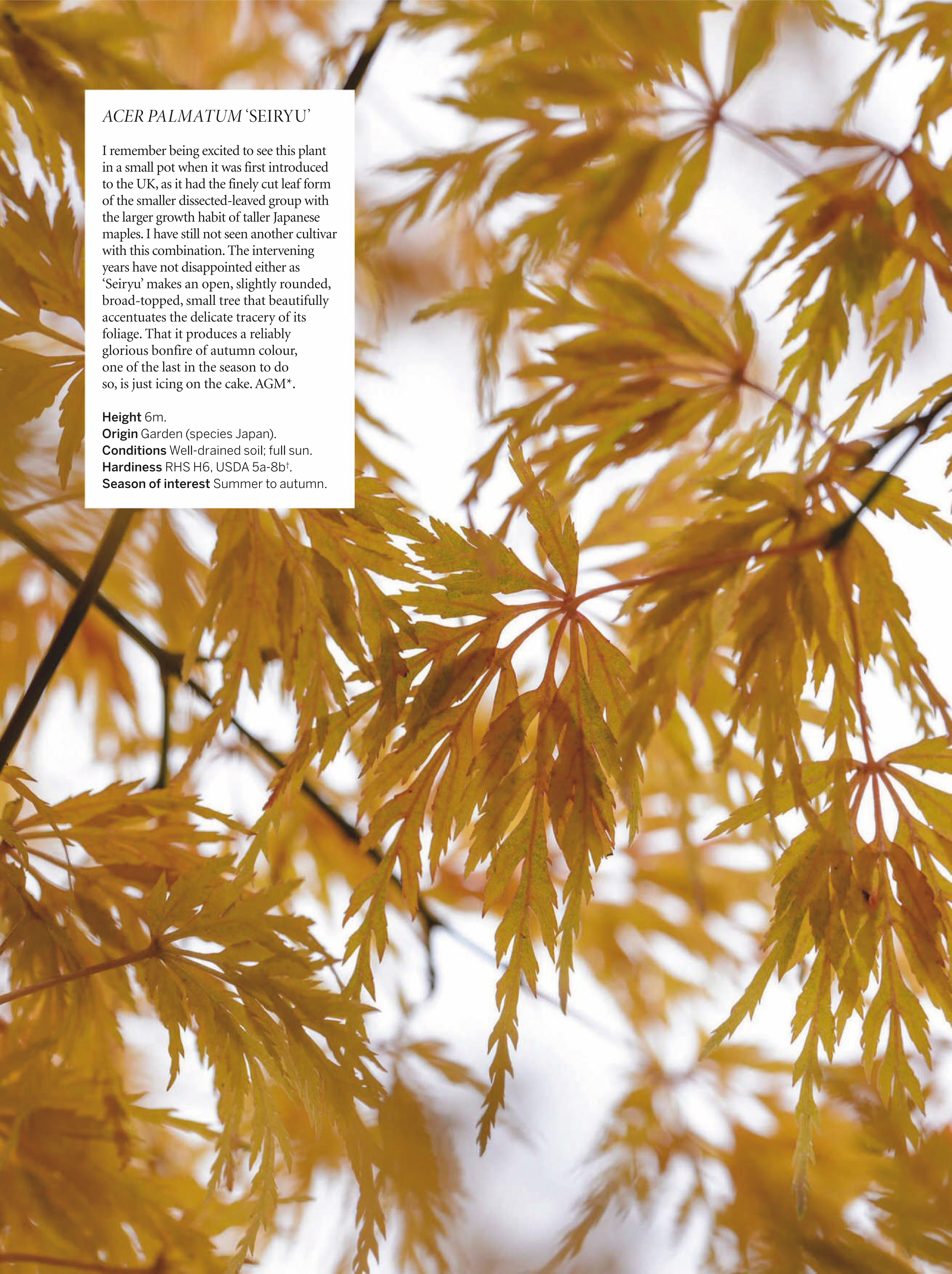
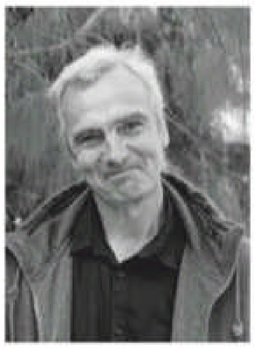
ACER PALMATUM ‘SEIRYU’

I remember being excited to see this plant in a small pot when it was first introduced to the UK, as it had the finely cut leaf form of the smaller dissected-leaved group with the larger growth habit of taller Japanese maples. I have still not seen another cultivar with this combination. The intervening years have not disappointed either as ‘Seiryu’ makes an open, slightly rounded, broad-topped, small tree that beautifully accentuates the delicate tracery of its foliage. That it produces a reliably glorious bonfire of autumn colour, one of the last in the season to do so, is just icing on the cake. AGM*.

Height 6m.
Origin Garden (species Japan).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b†.
Season of interest Summer to autumn.



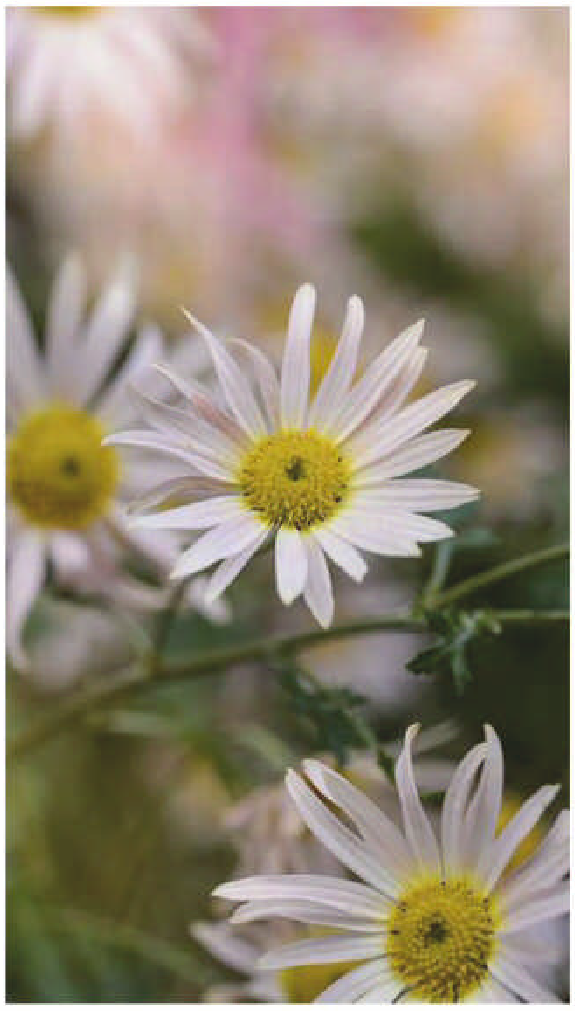

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Keith Wiley
runs Wildside
nursery in Devon
wileyatwildside.com

November plants

Though the days are getting shorter and cooler, Keith still finds some late colour for the garden, from bright chrysanthemums and nerines to an autumn-flowering snowdrop

WORDS **KEITH WILEY** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**



CHRYSANTHEMUM 'HILLSIDE APRICOT'

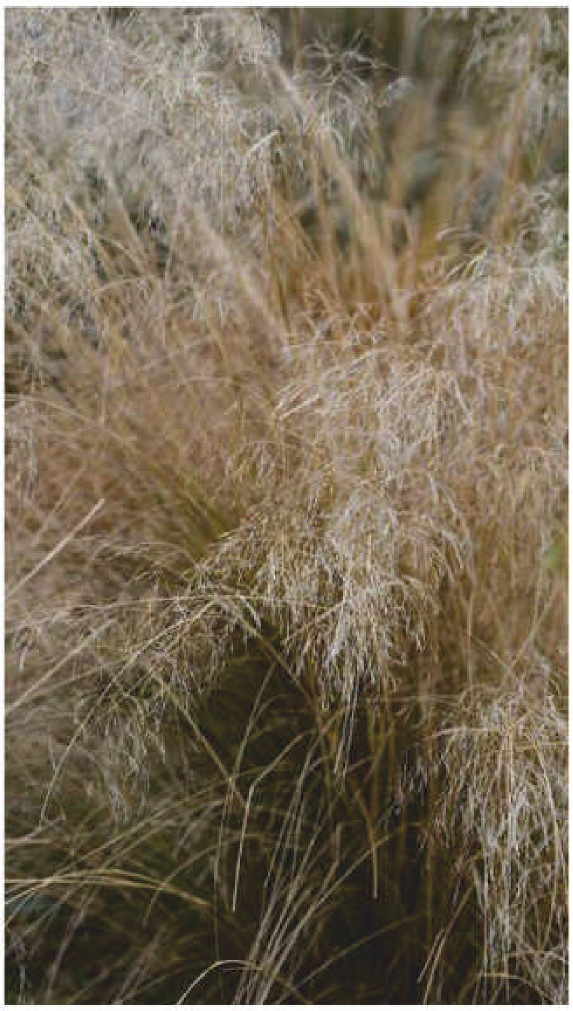
The highlight of one trip to the USA was seeing this plant in my host's garden, forming a gracefully arching mound of soft-apricot flowers. I was completely captivated, and when I was generously offered a tiny piece of root it became a most treasured possession. I was told it is also sometimes known as 'Hillside Sheffield Pink' or 'Single Apricot'. Back on home soil, whatever its name, it has proved to be a robust plant when grown in the garden, covering itself in flowers every year late in the season in October to November. A lovely cut flower if grown under cover.

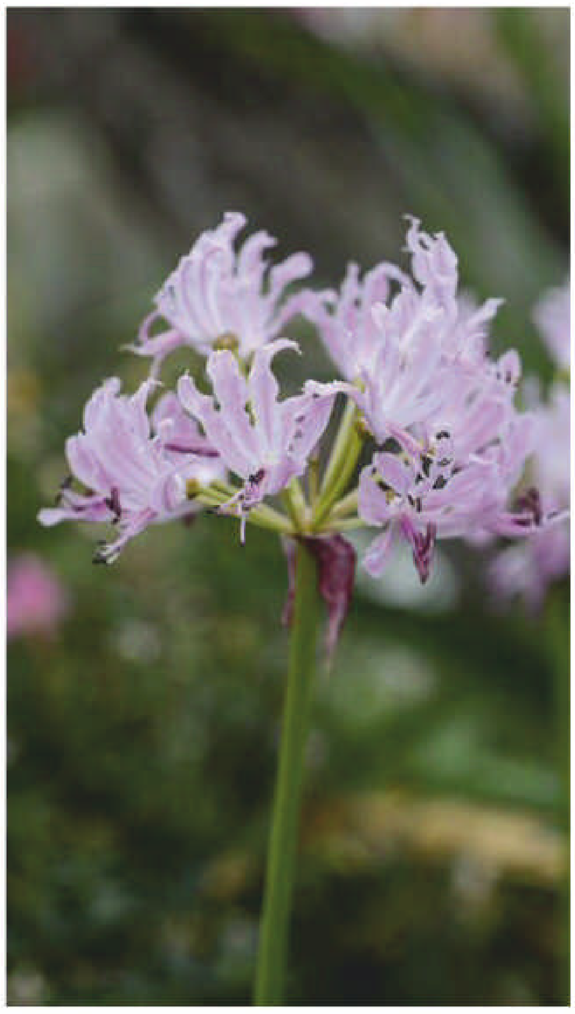
Height 80-90cm.
Origin Garden (species East Asia).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Autumn.

ERAGROSTIS CURVULA

Native to South Africa, this rarely met grass is sometimes called the African love grass but is also known as weeping love grass for its arching habit. Growing to a metre high in flower, it does need space to really show off its rounded weeping shape, and attention needs to be shown to check the inevitable seedlings are not in unwanted places. Despite these caveats this is a lovely grass whose graceful flowering shoots change colour from grey-green in the summer to straw-coloured in autumn, and through the winter months. I cut the clumps to the ground each spring when they quickly start growing again.

Height 1- 1.2m.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 6a-9b.
Season of interest Summer through to autumn.





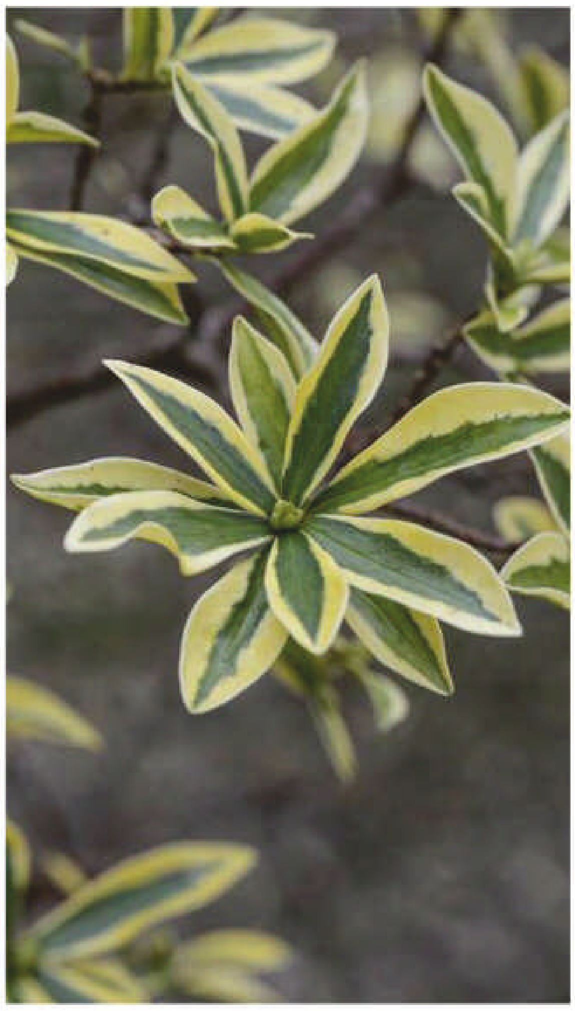
NERINE UNDULATA FLEXUOSA GROUP

Formerly known as *N. flexuosa* this species flowers later and has smaller, more graceful flowers than *N. bowdenii*. Although considered less hardy than the latter species, I have been successfully growing and flowering this plant outside and unprotected for many years now. Admittedly, we haven't had that many really cold winters during that time but it's certainly worth trying in a very well-drained, sheltered spot. The white-flowered form has broader petals and is perhaps even more beautiful, but unfortunately is slightly less hardy. As with all nerines, plant the bulbs with their necks at ground level.

Height 45cm.
Origin South Africa.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 8a-11.
Season of interest Autumn.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. Hardiness ratings given where available.

> *Daphne odora* 'Mae-jima' is grown primarily for its striking variegation, although it also flowers prolifically in early spring with a fruity scent



DAPHNE ODORA 'MAE-JIMA'

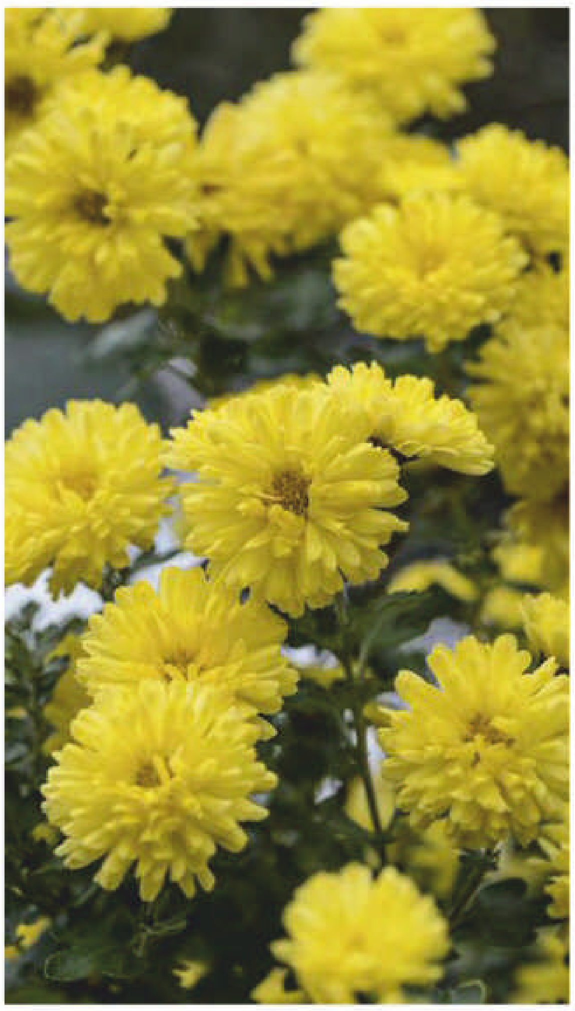
This daphne cultivar, selected in Japan, is grown primarily for its striking variegation, although it also flowers prolifically in the early spring with the characteristically fruity scent of all *D. odora* types. With its broad, bright-yellow margin, this is easily the best variegated form of this popular species, and the contrasting dark-green central portion of each leaf supplies the plant with enough chlorophyll to make it grow well. The flowers emerge from rosy-purple buds, an exciting prelude to the promise of the heady scent to come.

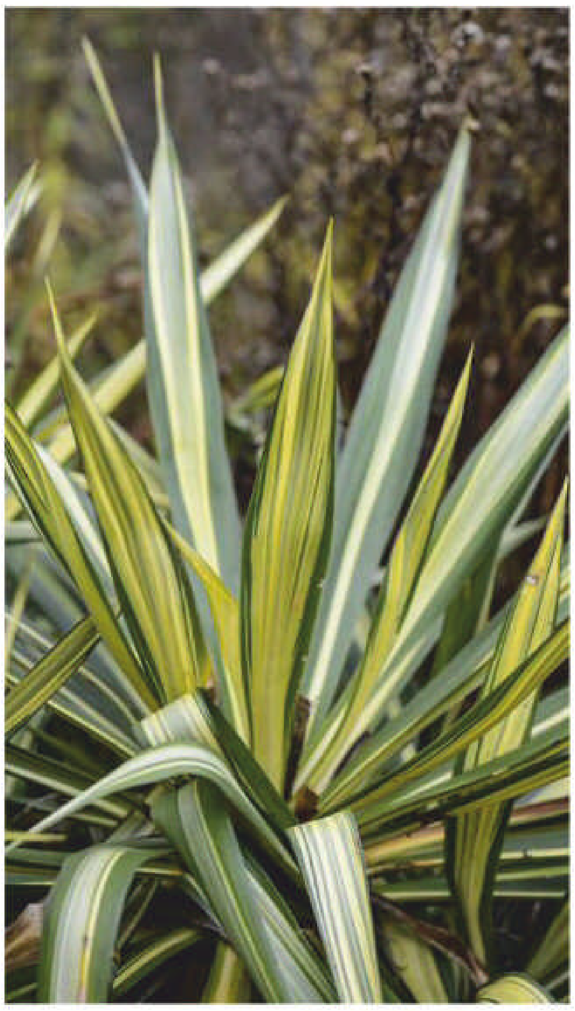
Height 1m.
Origin Garden (species China, Japan, Korea).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 7a-10b.
Season of interest All year for foliage, but early spring for flowers.

CHRYSANTHEMUM 'NANTYDERRY SUNSHINE'

A Welsh selection, raised in 1989 by the excellent plantswoman Mrs Rose Clay and named after her garden near the village of Nant-y-derry in Monmouthshire. It is yet another excellent late-flowering chrysanthemum with semi-pompon flowers that are relatively small but produced in tight branching sprays on stiffly upright stems and create significant patches of sunshine colour in the garden on neat clumps. Given an AGM by the RHS it was also honoured by the society as one of the top 200 plants of the past 200 years. It is good though. AGM.

Height 60-80cm.
Origin Garden (species East Asia).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Autumn.





YUCCA FLACCIDA 'GOLDEN SWORD'

Many yuccas should probably come with some sort of health warning because of the spikes on the end of their stiff leaves. This species (as its name suggests) has soft, rather limp foliage, meaning it can be planted closer to paths without fear of personal injury. It certainly merits more prominent planting as the variegation is very clean, forming a compact, slowly spreading clump. I would grow it for its foliage alone, so the reliably produced, stiff spikes of large, pure-white flowers in midsummer are a very welcome bonus. AGM.

Height 1-1.5m.
Origin Garden (species southern North America).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest Year round.

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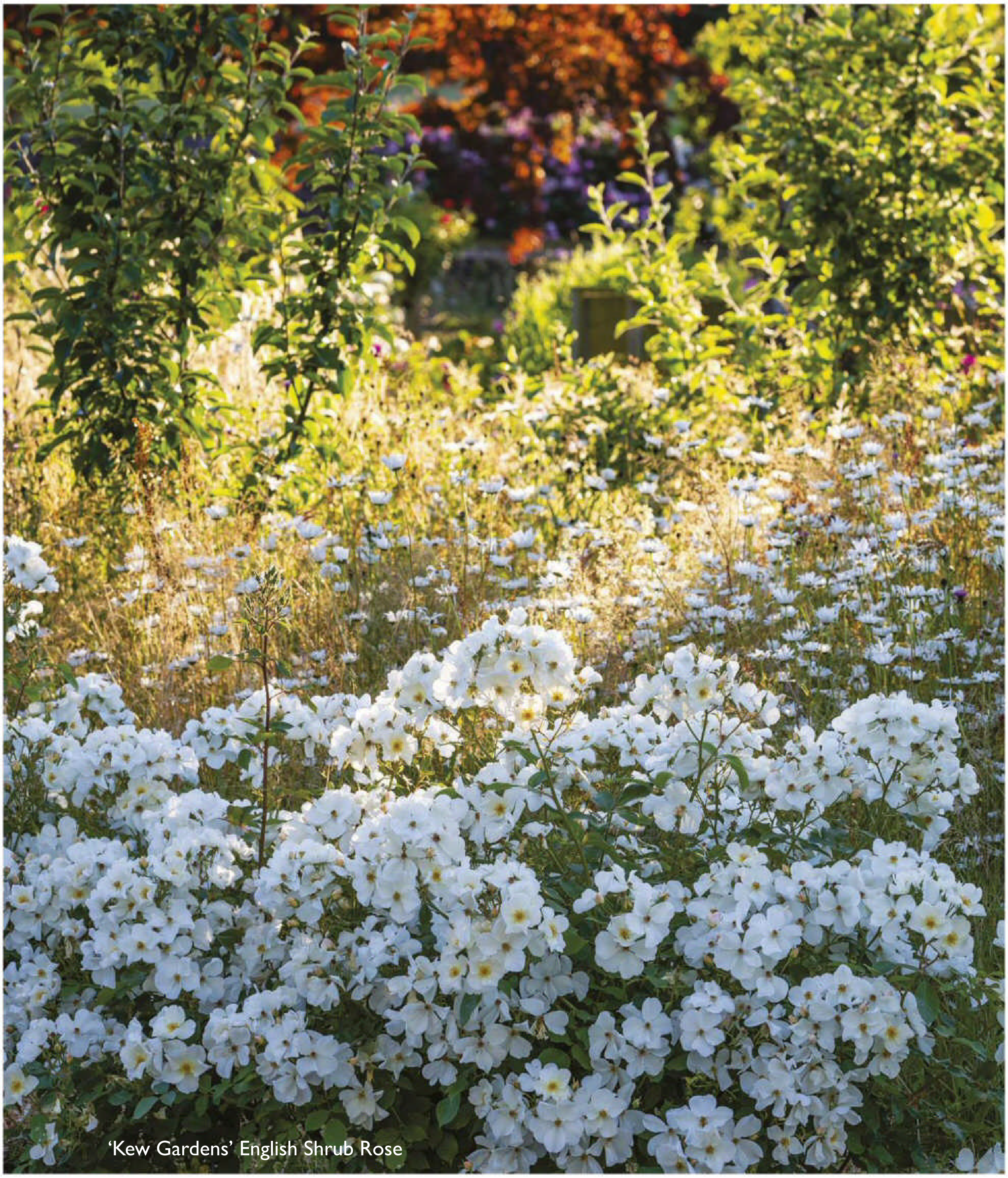

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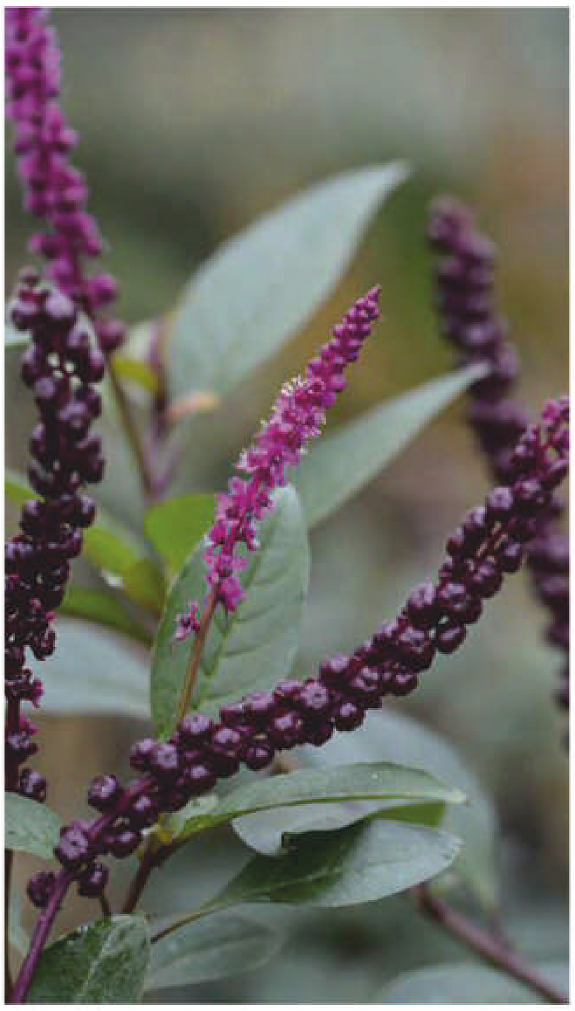
Galanthus reginae-olgae 'Eleni' would be a winner whenever it flowered, with a glorious honeyed scent thrown in for good measure

GALANTHUS REGINAE-OLGAE 'ELENI'

I suspect the craze for snowdrop collecting is rooted partly in the sparsity of other plants flowering so early in the year when most snowdrops flower and when growth and colour of any sort are so welcome. This species of snowdrop, which flowers in late autumn to early winter, often goes under the radar, perhaps because our gardens are still quite colourful if frosts haven't come early, and winter despair is yet to set in. This cultivar would be a winner whenever it flowered, with a glorious honeyed scent thrown in for good measure.

Height 20cm.
Origin Garden (species Greece, northern Mediterranean).
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.
Season of interest Autumn.



PHYTOLACCA ICOSANDRA PURPURASCENS GROUP

With crimson stems, purple-flushed foliage and months of bright-magenta flowers and crimson-black seeds it is hard to disagree with Crûg-Farm's description of its collection of this plant in Sumatra as an 'outstandingly colourful form of this species'. Generally not hardy so I try to keep one plant growing under light protection, but even if this fails seedlings nearly always appear the following spring. I was recently told of this species surviving several winters unscathed in the London area, so I must experiment a little more with it.

Height 1.5-2m.
Origin Central America and northern parts of South America, and widely naturalised worldwide.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun.
Hardiness RHS H3, USDA 9a-11.
Season of interest Summer to autumn.

HAKONECHLOA MACRA 'ALL GOLD'

Among grasses that are happy to grow in semi-shaded and shady places, the Japanese endemic hakone or Japanese forest grass is by some margin my favourite. The deciduous, green-leaved species makes a dense arching clump (around 80cm high) of soft foliage, which turns a lovely tawny colour in autumn. More usually seen in gardens are the variegated cultivars that have less reliable autumn colour. Of these 'All Gold' is slightly shorter but has the brightest variegation, especially in the spring and early summer, becoming more lime green in shadier spots.

Height 60cm.
Origin Japan.
Conditions Well-drained soil; full sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.
Season of interest Spring to autumn.

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FRESH START

While most of us think of November as a winding down of the year, for Aaron it represents an opportunity to start afresh, reassess what you've done in the previous season and start to look forward to the coming year with a blank slate

WORDS AARON BERTELSEN
ILLUSTRATION ALICE PATTULLO

It may sound strange, but for me November – far from spelling the end of the season – marks the start of the gardening year. One of the wonderful things about growing vegetables in particular is the regular opportunity it offers to start afresh, to put the mistakes and failures of the previous season behind you and begin again with a blank slate.

By the beginning of November, Great Dixter is closed to the public, and so the work of clearing up and preparing for the next year can begin in earnest. I love it. But of course there is a time for everything, and by the end of a long winter I am always very happy for the gates to be open again and visitors to be coming through, particularly those knowledgeable and discerning enough to compliment me on the state of the freshly dug soil in my pristine vegetable plot.

Before you grab the spade, and put up the 'Closed for business' sign, do just take a moment to look around and see what is still worth harvesting. Also remember that crops such as many of the root vegetables, cabbages and kale will just be coming into their own now and that chard, for example, will keep producing fresh leaves right the way through the winter. Note that plants such as tomatoes and potatoes, which could be carrying diseases such as blight, should not be composted. In the old days they would have gone on the bonfire; now the council will take them away and put them in landfill. ❐

Jobs for November

If you are planning to use your own compost in winter soil preparation, give the heap a once over to get rid of any weeds. If, like me, you also use the heap to grow gourds and pumpkins, get rid of any foliage and stems still hanging around.

Just as with digging, there are two schools of thought regarding the sowing of crops such as broad beans. Personally, I prefer to sow in spring, keeping the soil clear for digging and mulching accepting that I will have to wait a few extra weeks for my beans. But if you do prefer to sow in autumn, this is your last chance to get them in. They will be fine sown direct, provided the soil is still reasonably warm.

Clear the foliage from Jerusalem artichokes, cutting the stems down to the ground. They take forever to compost, so I tend to send them away in the green waste bin instead. The roots can be harvested throughout the winter, as and when you need them in the kitchen. Take them from the outside first to stop the plants from spreading.

Check netting on brassicas. With most crops cleared from the fields, the pigeons will be turning their attentions to our gardens now so it pays to be vigilant. Tie the sides of the netting in well so it can't blow around and be damaged.

Keep an eye on any stored crops for signs of rot and decay, and check that they are safe from marauding rodents. Apples and pears should not be touching, and potatoes must be kept dry. Good ventilation is so important. Very often your nose is the best guide – to me, a potato starting to rot smells like vodka.

Make your own leaf mould. It is so simple, and such a valuable resource. The famed nursery De Hessenhof in the Netherlands uses it as a growing medium and its plants are some of the healthiest I've ever seen. I love it as a mulch for crops in the ground or in pots, or as a soil conditioner. Just collect the leaves together in a corner, cover with a tarpaulin and leave to break down for a year or so.

Check over your garden tools and make sure they are in good order. Use a wire brush to clean any dirt and rust off the metal parts. Sharpen secateurs and other blades, and rub linseed oil into wooden handles. I find that as well as preserving the wood, this makes it a little kinder on the hands.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CROPS

If you feel the same way as I do about leeks, rejoice – November is the time to start lifting and eating these most versatile and helpful of vegetables. The backbone of almost any soup, stew or slow-cooked dish you can think of, I also love to see them take on a starring role, for example in a chicken and leek pie or tucked into a tart with some crumbled Stilton.

November is also the time when I stop admiring my winter squashes and pumpkins and start tucking in. Spiced pumpkin soup is always welcome after a cold morning's digging and pumpkin mash makes a welcome change from the ubiquitous potato served alongside grilled chops or sausages. I also love to make a pumpkin pie, and will often serve it up for Bonfire Night or, later in the month, for a Thanksgiving dinner with our American students and friends.

You can find Aaron's delicious recipe for pumpkin pie at gardensillustrated.com/recipes

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> I grew a Himalayan banana plant when I was 14 years old; I've never looked back

GARDENING TALENT

WILL PURDOM

At just 24, Will is the founder of nursery business Botanico, through which he is introducing others to his love of exotics

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest gardening memory Planting conkers from a horse chestnut tree that grew just up the road from our house. My mother and I also grew other tree seeds that we collected, such as a hazel that I still have growing in the garden today, which is now 2.5m tall.
First plant love The Himalayan banana *Musa sikkimensis*. This was one of the first exotic plants I grew when I was about 14 years old and I've never looked back.
Favourite garden that has influenced you I used to volunteer at the Will Giles Exotic Garden in Norwich, and this is where I really got the bug, in among all the exotic plants. This was one of the first, true exotic or subtropical gardens of the 21st century, specialising in hardy bananas, gingers and huge tetrapanax. Will experimented with exotic and unusual plants to see what could tolerate, and flourish in, the UK climate, and the garden really was the original inspiration for most exotic gardens in this country.
Favourite planting style Has to be informal exotic gardening. Having this exotic look, with huge leaves of species such as *Musa basjoo* and *Colocasia*, and clusters of bright flowers of the most unusual forms, which you can then mix with more traditional themes within any back garden, is the most amazing idea. The best thing about this style of gardening is it is so flexible as around 25 per cent of the plants are already in your garden. You can mix dahlias, cordylines, petunias or even cotinus in with the tropical feel.
Dream plant destination India; I would love to see some of the impatiens in my National Collection in their native habitat, especially the rare *Impatiens parasitica*.
How to garden more sustainably Save water – use water butts, or even a bucket. Save every drop you can.
In what direction do you see horticulture heading in the next few years? Houseplants will continue to be popular but other aspects of outdoor horticulture will start to re-emerge. I think bedding in combinations of exotic and unusual plants will be a key element to the next story in horticulture.
Next big project you'll be tackling in the garden Sorting the Plant Heritage National Collection of *Impatiens* we hold at Botanico and updating all records on them before winter comes.
Contact Botanico, Barnby Garden Centre, Swan Lane, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 7QF. **Web** thebotanico.com
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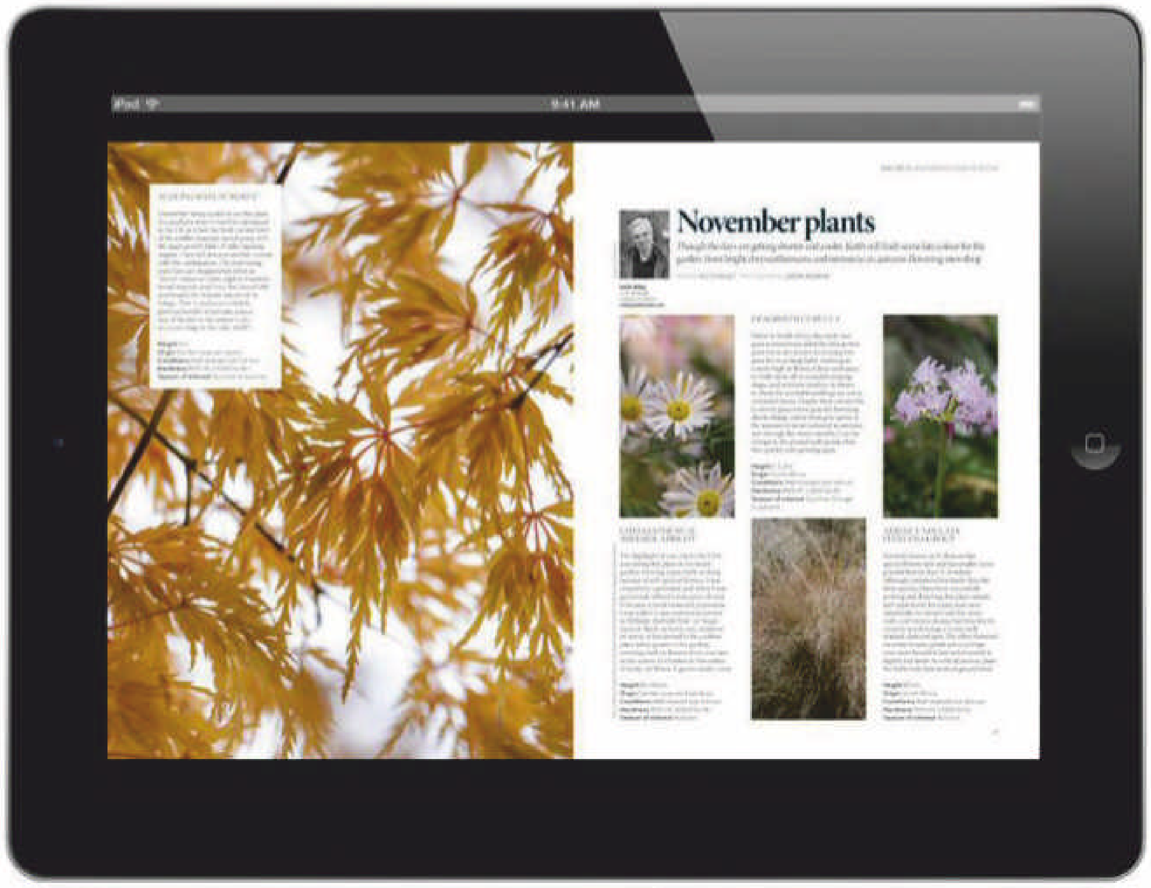
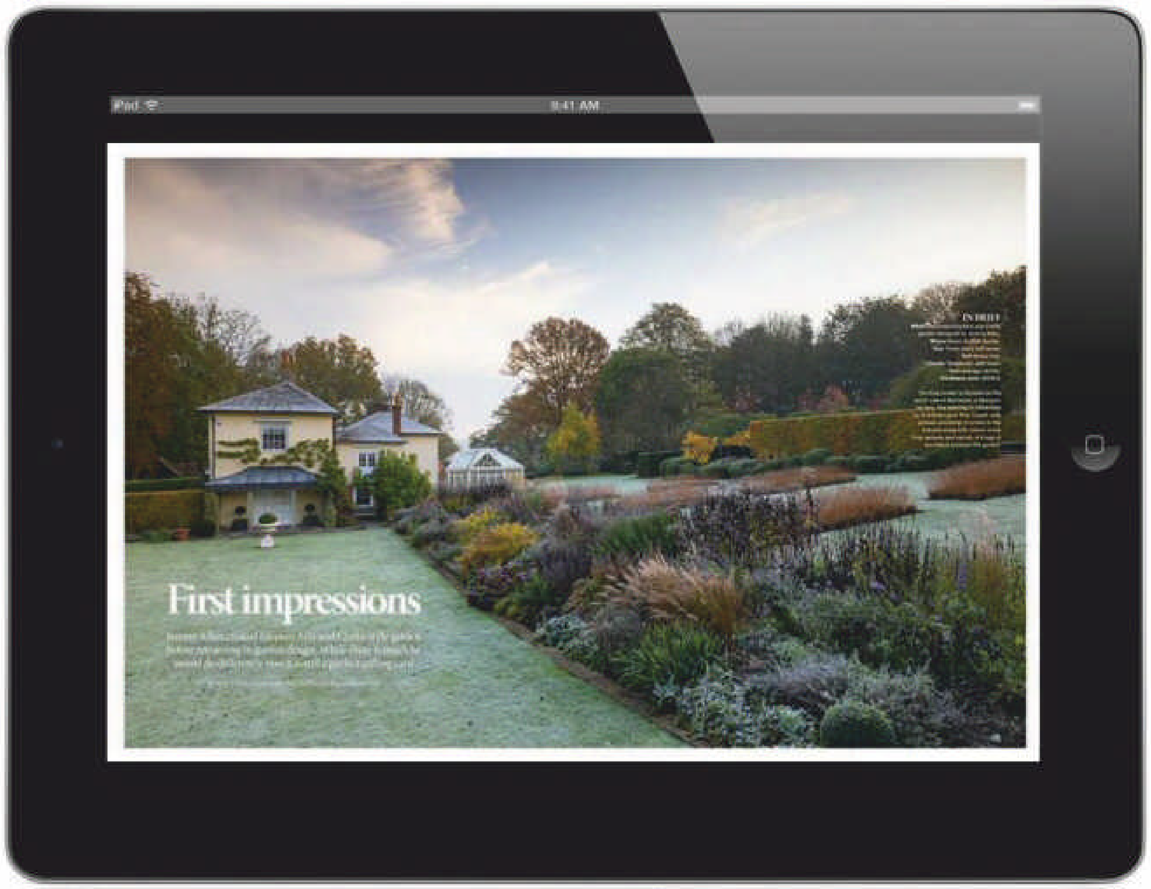

November plants


First impressions

A must-have read for passionate gardeners, *Gardens Illustrated* magazine provides a unique insight into the world's most beautiful gardens, expert advice and planting ideas.

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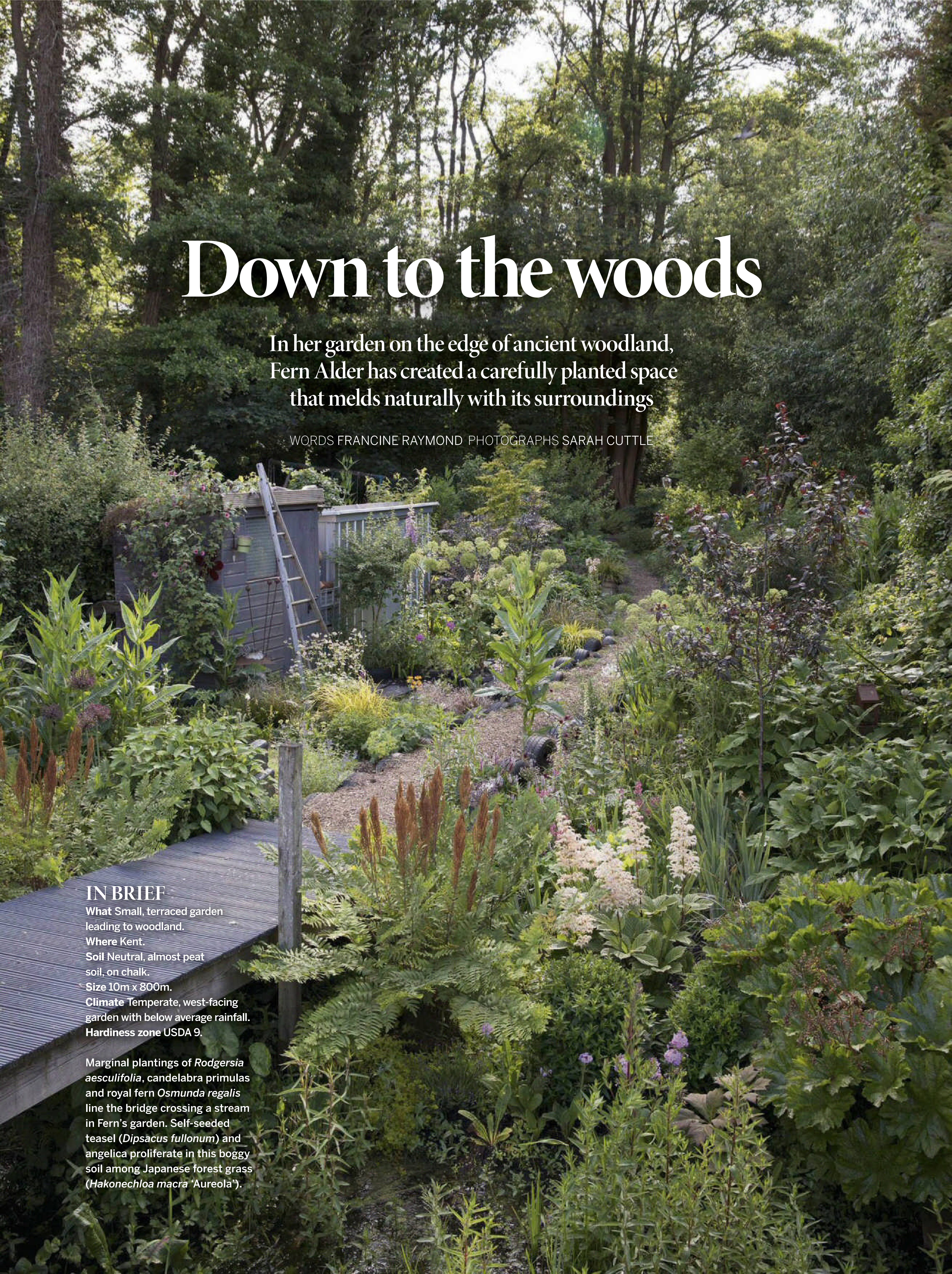


Down to the woods

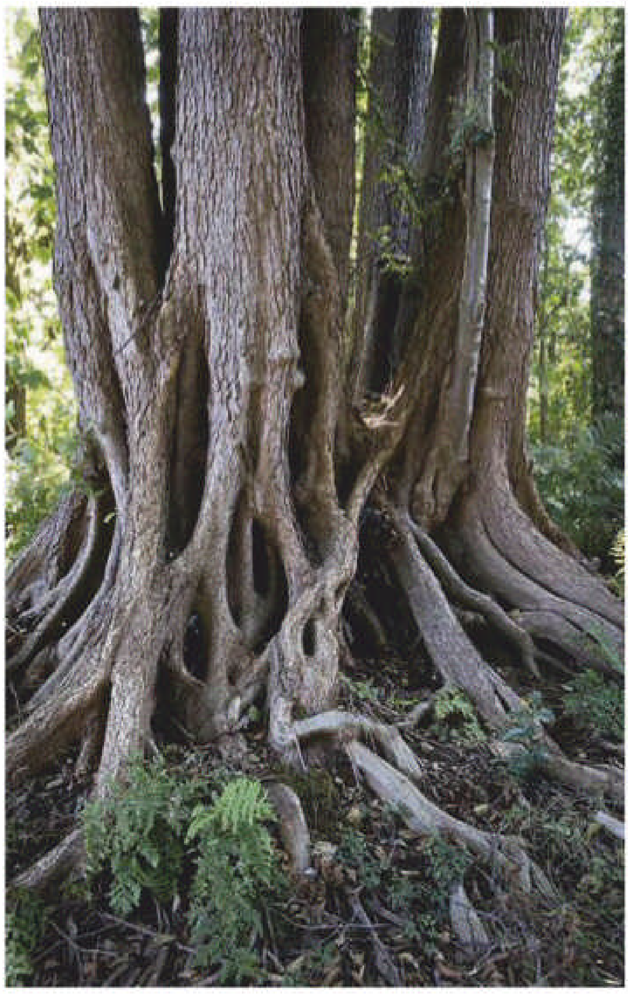
In her garden on the edge of ancient woodland, Fern Alder has created a carefully planted space that melds naturally with its surroundings

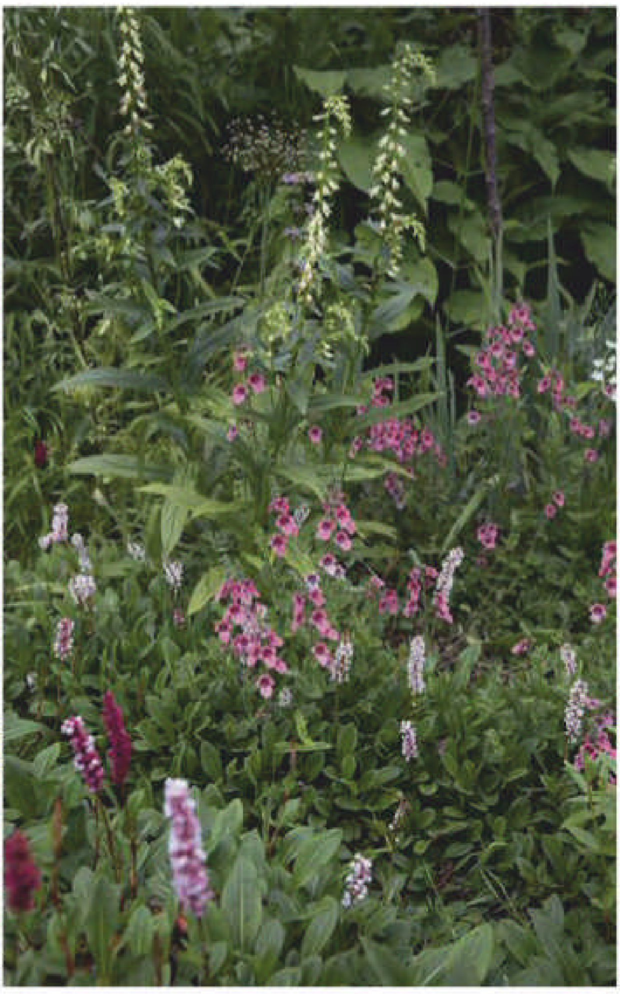
WORDS FRANCINE RAYMOND PHOTOGRAPHS SARAH CUTTLE

IN BRIEF

What Small, terraced garden leading to woodland.
Where Kent.
Soil Neutral, almost peat soil, on chalk.
Size 10m x 800m.
Climate Temperate, west-facing garden with below average rainfall.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

Marginal plantings of *Rodgersia aesculifolia*, candelabra primulas and royal fern *Osmunda regalis* line the bridge crossing a stream in Fern's garden. Self-seeded teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) and angelica proliferate in this boggy soil among Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola').





Above left The most ancient and beautiful tree in the woodland, a much-coppiced, 50-metre-tall common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) is underplanted with ferns (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) – two of the owner's namesakes.

Above *Persicaria amplexicaulis* (Fern's first purchase for this garden), pink *Diascia personata* and yellow foxglove *Digitalis lutea* grow happily in woodland soil.

Right Gardener Fern Alder makes charcoal in the forest clearing at the end of her woodland garden. The wood will smoke for a few hours while the gases are released, but the charcoal won't be ready until the following day.

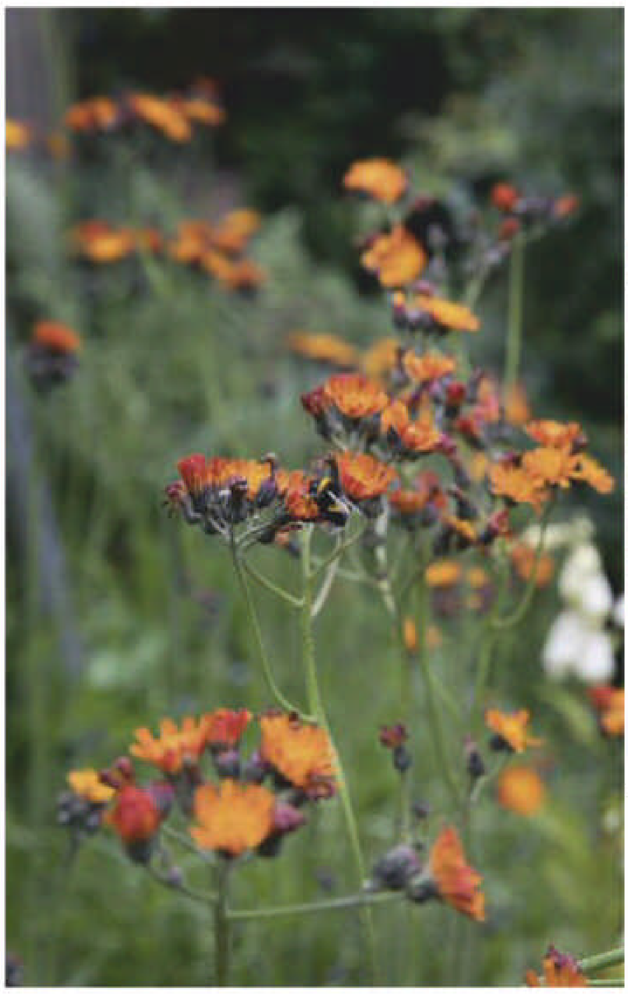
It's usually quite easy to imagine the gardens behind houses, but some are a complete surprise. Walking along a terrace of boxy 1960s' buildings, nothing quite prepares you for ancient woodland crossed by a meandering watercress stream with a lush wetland garden in between, especially in the driest part of Kent.

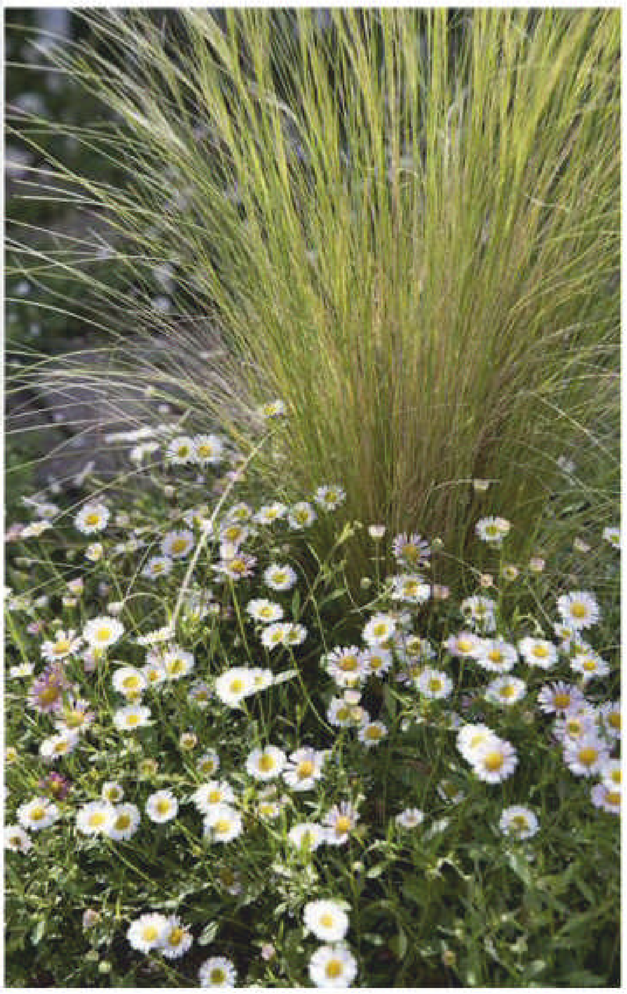
The backdrop, and major part of this garden, is Alder Carr woodland, established and coppiced centuries ago to supply charcoal for the gunpowder industry in Faversham, a habitat described by the Woodland Trust as: 'Wild, transient, boggy and rare. Trees like Alder, Willow and Birch dominate on wet soils, while sedges, ferns and mosses flourish beneath'. How appropriate then that the owner of this very special place should be named after two of its most prolific plants: Fern Alder.

Fern's back door opens out on to a small terrace, its paving stones filled with tiny creeping thymes (*Thymus serpyllum* 'Minor'), down steps covered with tumbling Mexican fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*), over a bridged stream banked by a boggy area planted with marginals: *Rodgersia aesculifolia*, candelabra primulas and a pair of *Osmunda regalis*. This leads on to a grassy area that over the past six years, has been populated with plants such as *Eupatorium purpureum*, *Valeriana officinalis* and *Silene fimbriata*, plants that don't just survive, but thrive in the black soil that fills with water when you dig a planting hole and sometimes floods into small pools during winter. Vegetables are grown in huge tractor tyres, raised above the wet, and fruit and berry bushes are popped in between flowering plants.

A designer who has show gardens at Chelsea, Hampton Court Palace and Nagasaki under her belt, Fern knew what would grow, but unlike many confronted with a blank canvas, she didn't sit down and order lots of plants. "The plants arrived organically. My first purchase – *Persicaria amplexicaulis* – came from a car boot sale, and it flourished. I wanted to take a light touch: gradually adding things I knew would love it here, then self-seeders: *Cardamine pratensis*, meadowsweet and *Lythrum salicaria* arrived, courtesy of the birds or the wind."

Many of Fern's plants have come from local events where plants are swapped. Fern is one of the guiding lights in the Faversham gardening world; she volunteers, cares for trees, clears ▷





Above left *Pilosella aurantiaca* self-seeds wildly all over the garden, especially on the bridge and banks of the stream where it enjoys a boggy footing.

Above Finished charcoal made especially for artist friends from dead alder twigs. Larger lumps can be used for cooking while finer pieces make good soil conditioner or sprinkled over seedlings.

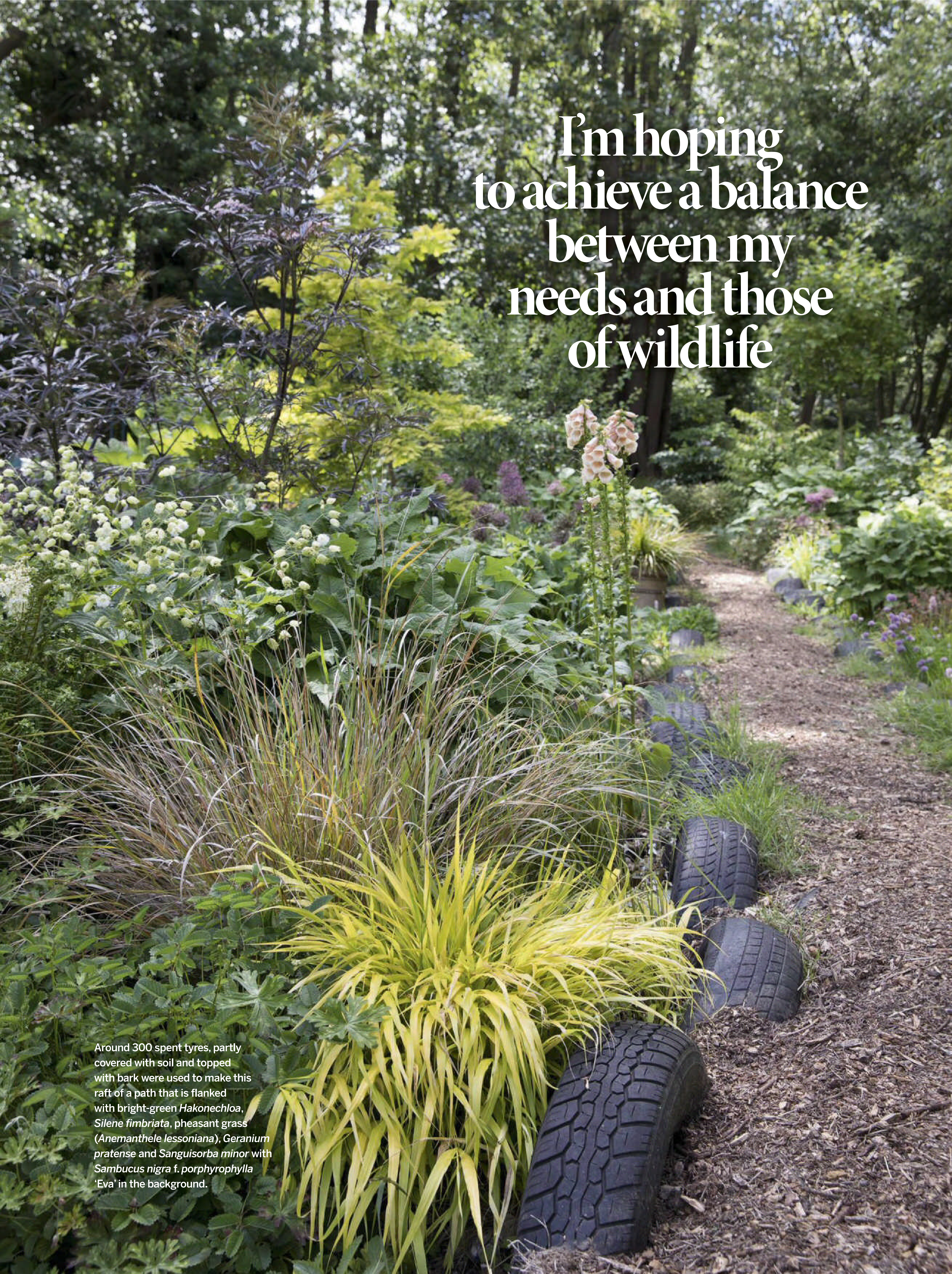
Right *Stipa tenuissima* and *Erigeron karvinskianus* self-seeded up on the small terrace on the near side of the stream. Fern is always happy to welcome self-seeders.

▷ streams and is one of the pioneers of the town's successful Open Gardens event that sees around 30 gardens, including Fern's own, open across the town most years in June.

Heralded by a pair of *Viburnum plicatum* f. *tomentosum* 'Mariesii' the garden melds gradually into the woodland, and Fern has approached this undisturbed wilderness with its tangle of woody species, brambles and nettles with care. Fallen trees, metal frames and buried rubble had to be moved to plant the golden-leaved form of grey alder, *Alnus incana* 'Aurea' and *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, so small patches were cleared with a brush cutter, covered with cardboard and a layer of woodchip, and then watched patiently for a year before planting. "As garden makers, we try to take control, but I'm hoping to achieve a balance between my needs and those of wildlife, curating this space in a sustainable, thoughtful way. I'm an interloper here, among the frogs and foxes, slowworms, moles, bats and birds: I've even seen woodcock."

With boundaries defined by mixed native hedging and dead hedges, gaining access through the garden was a Herculean task. She begged 300 spent car tyres from local garages and buried them some on end, on either side of the path, and others laid flat in the centre, then filled them with four tons of soil to create 150 metres of stable raised walkway that now lead to a small, cool, grassy clearing, a space to relax and celebrate this rare historic woodland.

You can feel the temperature drop as you enter deep woods, the trees stretch tall to reach the light, while nettles, willowherb, ferns, flags and meadowsweet grow in their shade. "It's a special place: I'm aware of how privileged I am," says Fern. Protected by a blanket Tree Preservation Order, every tree felled needs permission. As wet woodland it forms just 0.05 per cent of national woodland, and the trees, mostly alder and willow are the offspring of those planted in marshy ground for charcoal production, essential ingredients with sulphur and saltpeter in gunpowder production from the early 16th century until the First World War. In spirit with her surroundings, Fern occasionally burns deadwood to make charcoal for use as artists' materials. ☐



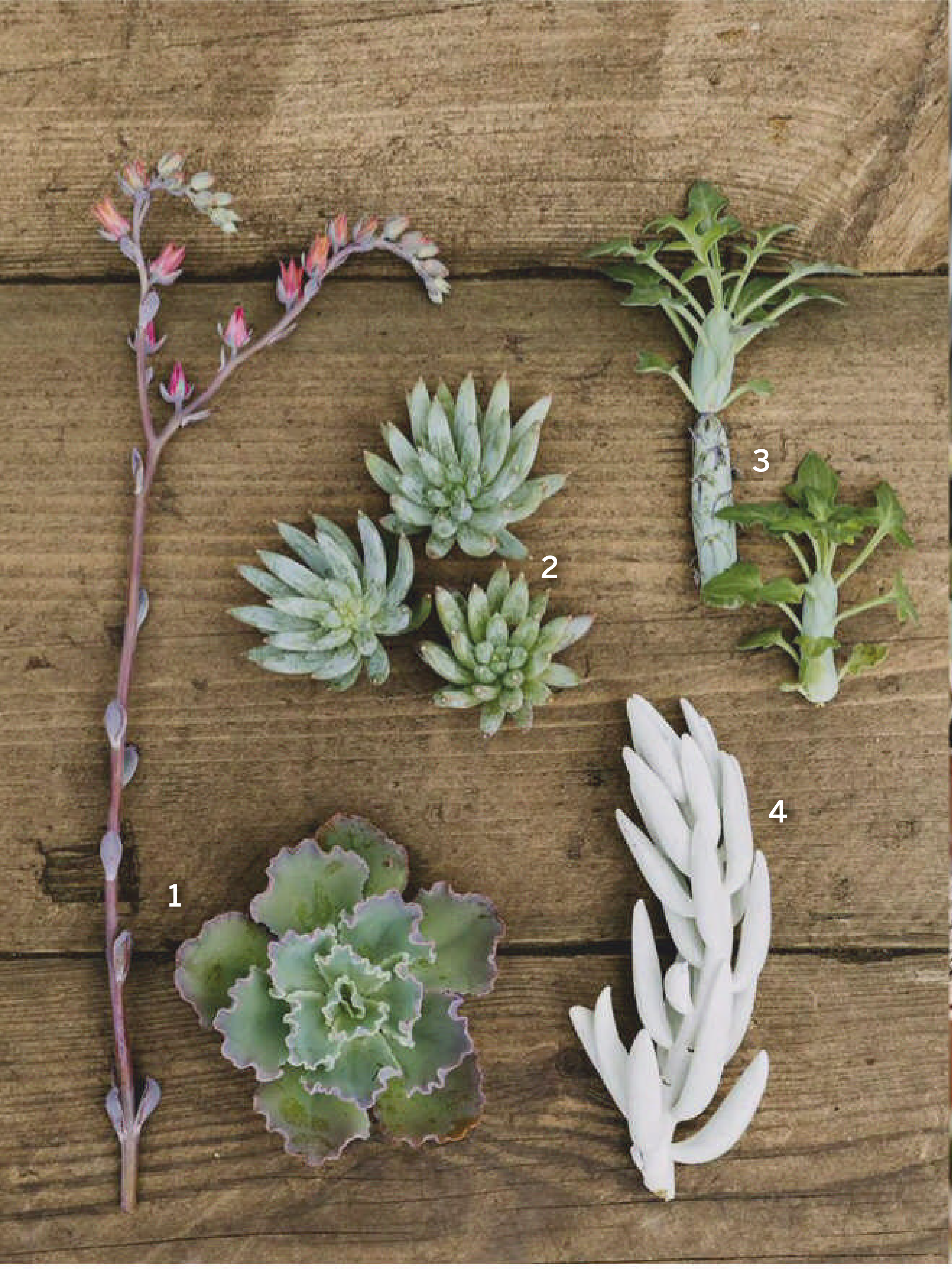
I'm hoping to achieve a balance between my needs and those of wildlife

Around 300 spent tyres, partly covered with soil and topped with bark were used to make this raft of a path that is flanked with bright-green *Hakonechloa*, *Silene fimbriata*, pheasant grass (*Anemanthele lessoniana*), *Geranium pratense* and *Sanguisorba minor* with *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva' in the background.

HOUSE PROUD

Head gardener Ben Preston creates three displays to take pride of place indoors over winter and then transferred to the garden once warm weather returns

WORDS BEN PRESTON PHOTOGRAPHS EVA NEMETH



SUCCULENT ODYSSEY

Succulents have risen in popularity in recent years and rightly so, coming in so many different weird and wonderful forms. This collection of glaucous silvery species ranges from the intriguing *Curio articulatus*, with sausage-shaped stem segments topped with a tree-like canopy of succulent leaves, to the very attractive *Echeveria* 'Blue Curls'. Its fleshy undulating rosettes with their pink margins wouldn't look out of place on a coral reef.

How to achieve the look

Container and composition

I prefer using traditional, shallow terracotta pots for succulents as they help to show off the individual character of each species. Here my intention was to combine several different silver-formed succulents each with its own unique style. The two taller species from South Africa look very different. *Caputia tomentosa* has a felt-like appearance with jelly bean-shaped leaves while the unusual *Curio articulatus* has swollen stems that resemble sausages. My favourite is *Echeveria* 'Blue Curls'; its glaucous blue cups defined with a waxy pink leaf margins are very attractive and the peachy-red flowers appear from late-summer to the end of the year. But there is no end to the diverse range of succulents, the combinations are endless.

Care and cultivation

All the succulents in the combination are very drought tolerant, and I have found the best watering regime to be the soak and dry method. Allowing the pot to dry completely before watering mimics the conditions these plants encounter in their natural environments and reduces the risk of rotting through becoming too saturated. Although all four species can tolerate a light frost, a combination of the wet and cold will kill these plants, so I keep them under cover during the cold months. A position in full sun is required to grow these plants to their full potential. I have a small south-facing glasshouse but a windowsill or conservatory in full sun will work just as well.

Plants

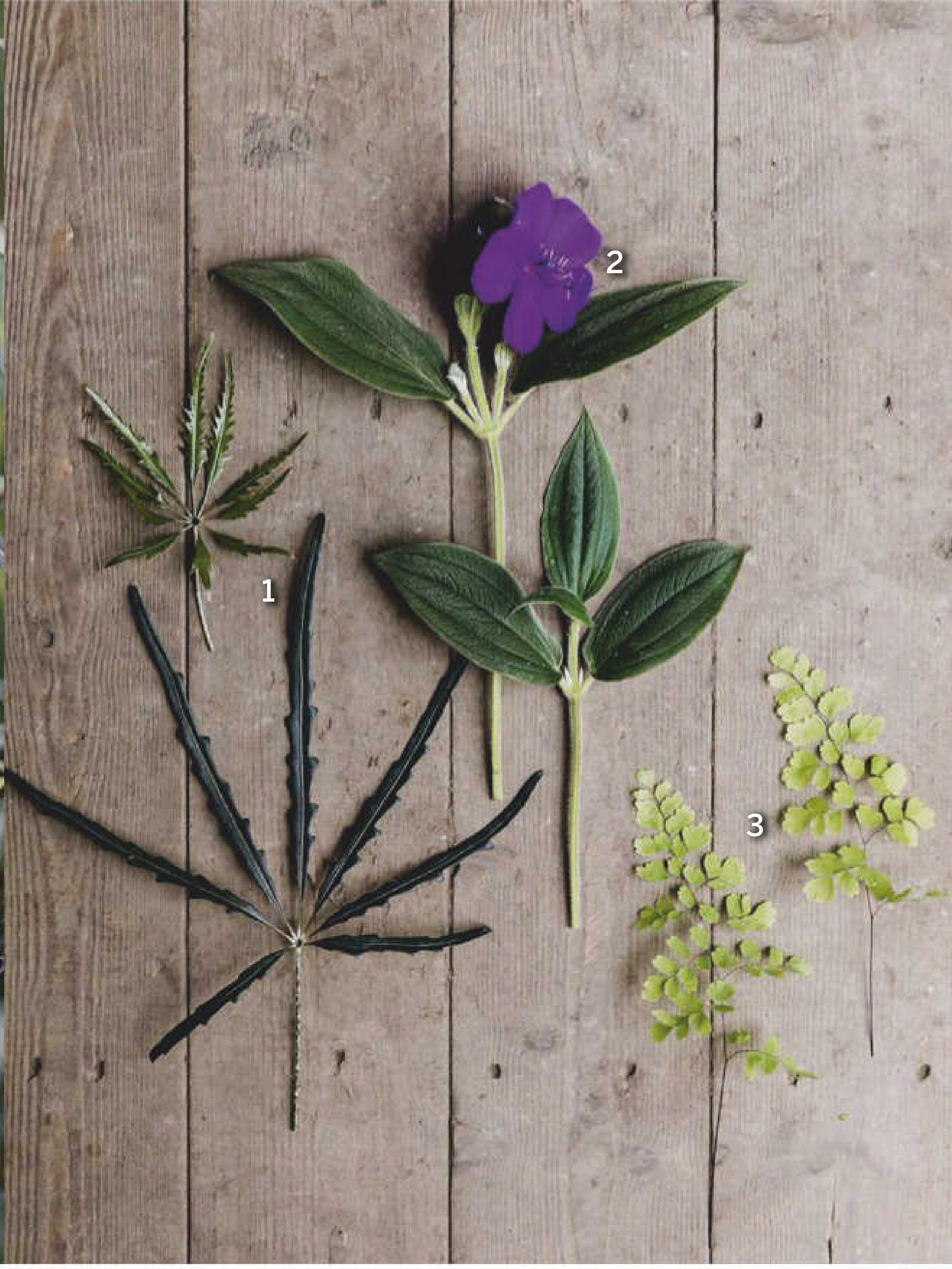
1 *Echeveria* 'Blue Curls' Wavy, glaucous-blue leaves with pink hue to the leaf margins. A thin flower spike is topped with peachy-red flowers from late summer to winter. Needs full sun. 30cm. RHS H2. USDA 9a-11[†].

2 x *Pachyveria* 'Glauca' Compact succulent with a neat glaucous spikey rosette, very drought tolerant. Full sun. 15cm. RHS H3.

3 *Curio articulatus* Unusual upright succulent. Leaves go dormant in summer. Full sun. 60cm. RHS H2.

4 *Caputia tomentosa* Upright cylindrical leaves are covered in white hairs, giving a silvery felt effect to the overall plant. Full sun. 30cm. AGM*. RHS H1C.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.



INSIDE OUT

Don't be afraid to play around with planting combinations or to bend the rules. These exotic and tender houseplants live inside in the winter months and are moved outside for the summer. The evergreen and textural foliage of *Plerandra elegantissima* and soft lime-green hue of the *Adiantum capillus-veneris* provide year-round interest while the eye-popping purple blooms of *Tibouchina urvilleana* are produced all summer but often flush again in the depths of winter.

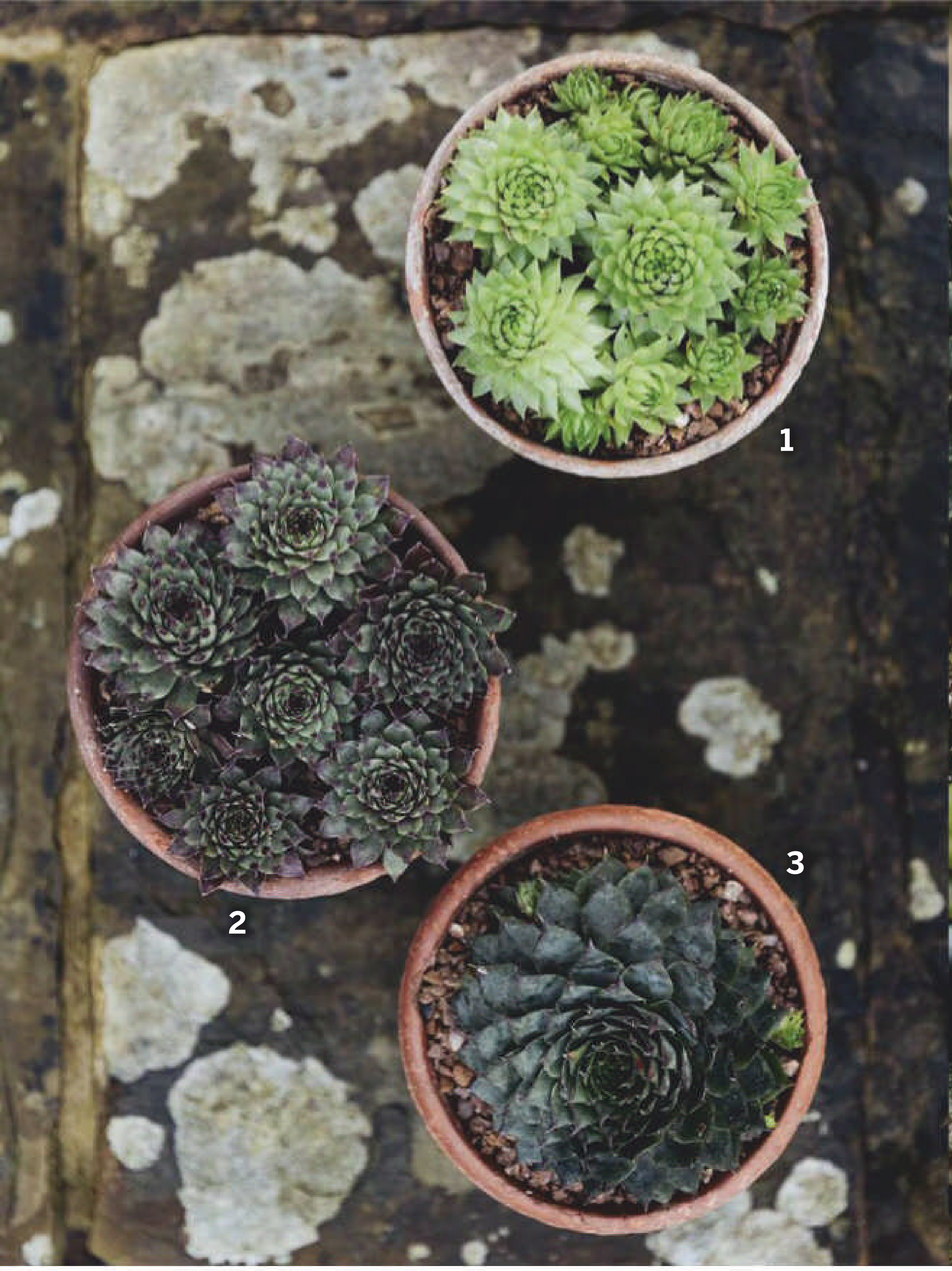
How to achieve the look

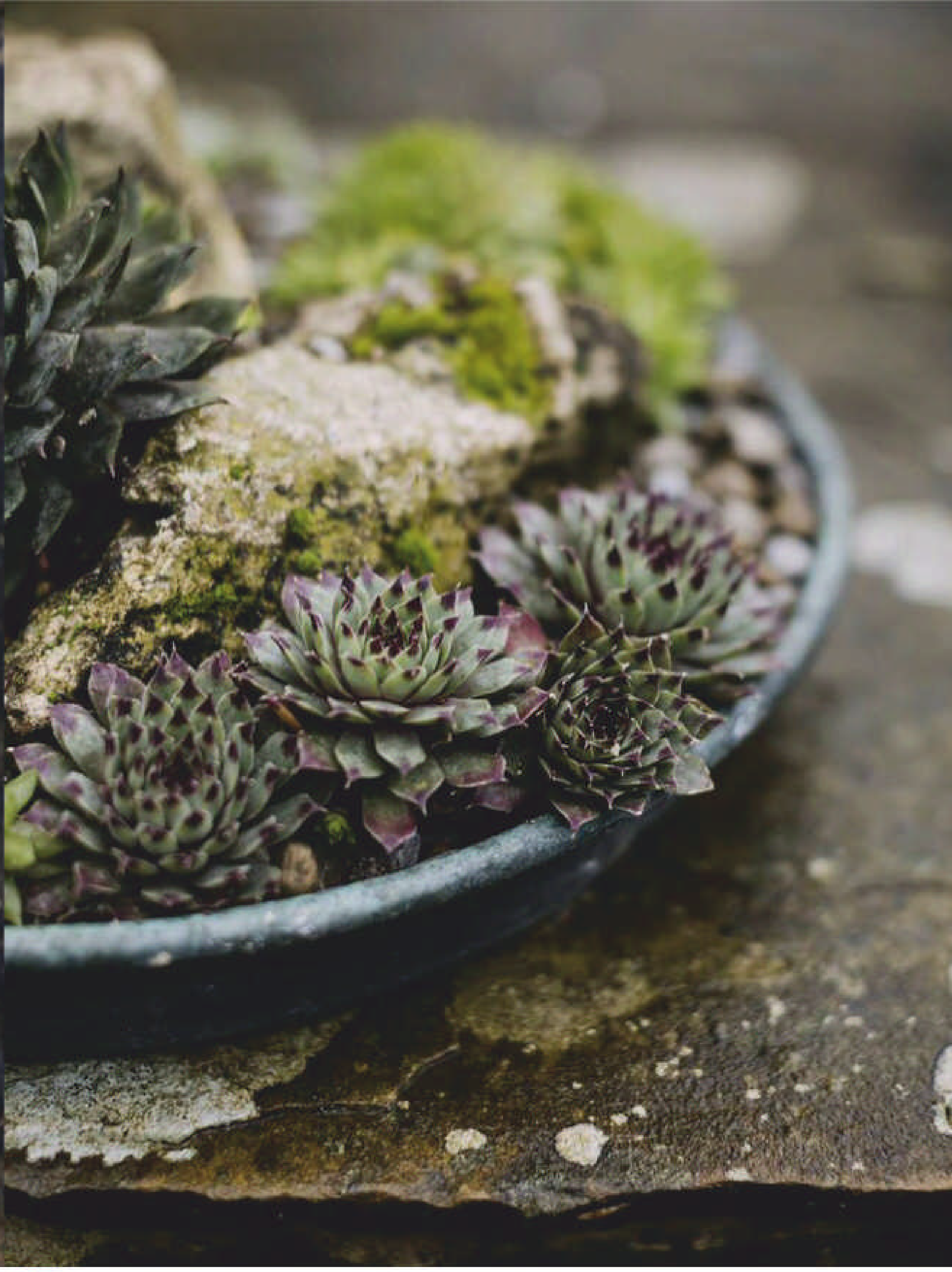
Container and composition
Composite planters such as this slate-style pot are both more affordable and weigh far less than their slate counterparts. They're also easily sourced. The lime-green froth of *Adiantum capillus-veneris* sets the combination off, contrasting well with the metallic effect of the container and the much darker, linear and strongly toothed leaves of the *Plerandra elegantissima*. The flare of the combination comes from the very flamboyant blooms of the *Tibouchina urvilleana*, which are produced all summer and keep throwing out the odd flower through the winter, even the spent, fallen petals look attractive. This display is perfect for gardeners who have little space with perhaps only a courtyard outside

Care and cultivation
All three species need reasonable humidity and temperatures above 5-10°C. I place this display on an east-facing window ledge, so it receives direct light through the winter months. Misting the foliage at least once a week will help keep the humidity high. Using a small hand-held sprayer will vastly improve overall plant health. Low humidity can often be the failing of many houseplants in modern houses with little ventilation and dry central heating. Outside *Tibouchina urvilleana* grows vigorously in the summer months and requires direct sunlight to produce plentiful blooms, it also helps to cast adequate dappled shade for both the *Plerandra elegantissima* and *Adiantum capillus-veneris* to perform at their best in midsummer.

Plants

1 *Plerandra elegantissima* A slow-growing tender shrub that is a popular houseplant. Its open, dark-bronze palmate leaves are very attractive. Needs winter protection. Part shade. 2.5m. AGM. RHS H1B.
2 *Tibouchina urvilleana* Striking, purple-violet flowers throughout the summer and sporadically in winter. Full sun to part shade. 3m. AGM. RHS H2, USDA 9a-11.
3 *Adiantum capillus-veneris*
An airy, tender evergreen fern. New foliage is a flush of bright lime green that becomes deeper as it ages. Requires bright but indirect sunlight. Part to full shade. 40cm. RHS H2, USDA 5a-8b.





HOUSELEEK MOUNTAIN

The tight, intricate spirals of houseleeks are native to regions of rocky hillsides and mountains, making them incredibly tough and very easy to grow as they tolerate both intense heat and hard frosts. In this shallow copper cooking pan, I have created a miniature landscape using local sandstone and three of my favourite houseleek cultivars. Nestling neatly in the cracks, they will eventually create a patchwork on rosettes that look impressive year-round.

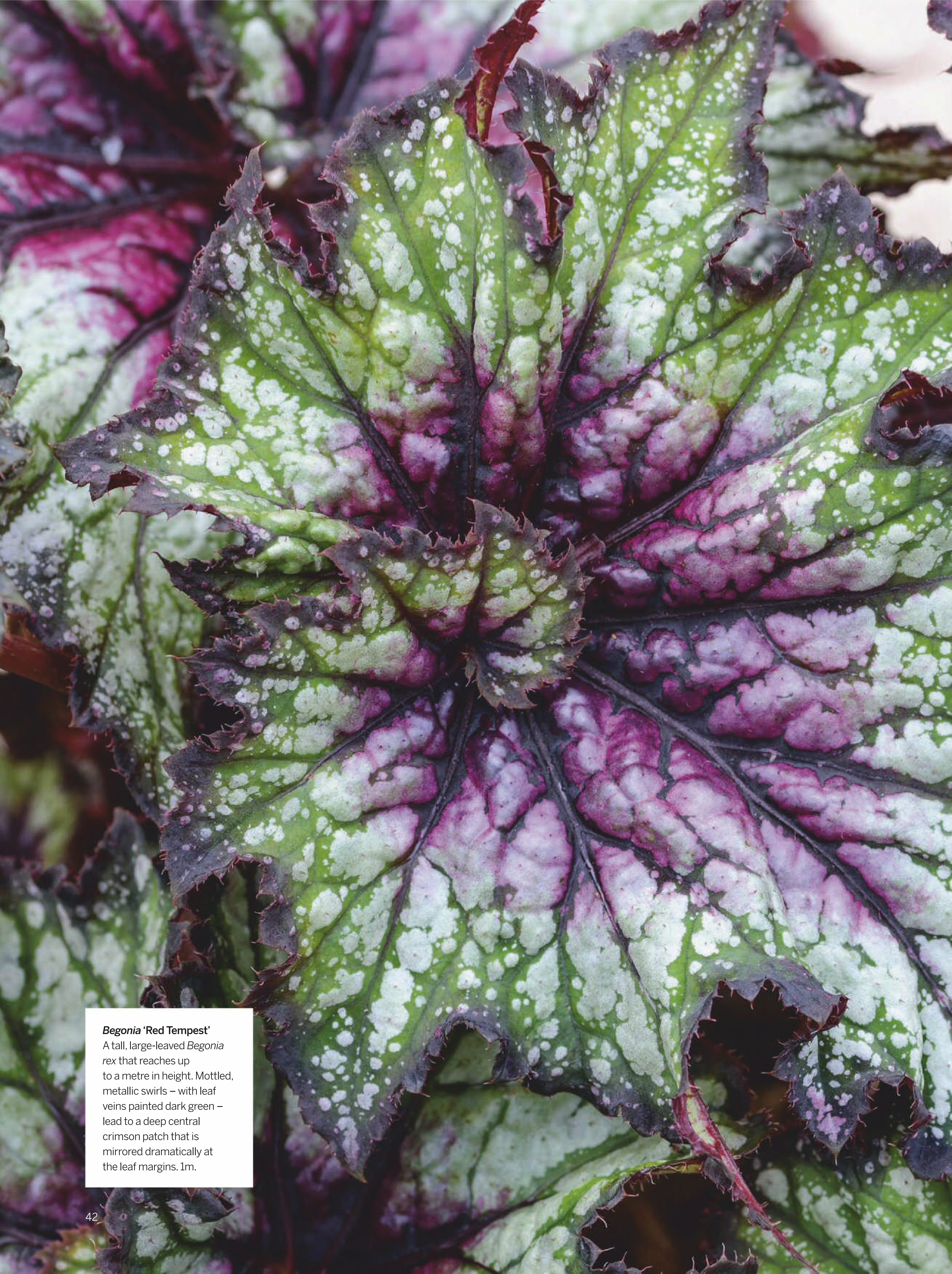
How to achieve the look

Container and composition
Houseleeks require very little depth, so this rustic copper pan is perfect. First, place the desired rocks to create a miniature mountainscape, this provides the free-draining crevices that will help the houseleeks thrive. The tight rosettes can be squeezed between the container's edge and the tiny ravines between the rocks. The largest cultivar here is the impressive *Sempervivum* 'Kong', with domed, dark grey-green rosettes that sit in the centre of the mini mountain. Around the pan's edge I've used the dark maroon-tipped *S. calcareum* 'Sir William Lawrence' in repetition with the smaller, bright-green rosettes of *Jovibarba allionii* , which help to show off the dark tones of the sempervivums.

Care and cultivation
These tender-looking succulents can be hardy to -15°C and tolerate very unfertile and stony ground. It is important when growing them in containers that the medium is very free draining as they will rot in the winter if sitting wet. I use a very simple 50/50 mix of horticultural grit and any peat-free, multi-purpose compost, with no feed. The individual rosettes are monocarpic so when they produce a flower spike in the summer they will expire. In this process they will produce many little rosette offsets at their base, which can be easily propagated or left to create a dense carpet. To propagate, simply twist the young rosettes between your thumb and index finger and pot on or move to your desired location.

Plants

1 *Jovibarba allionii* Evergreen mat-forming succulent. The yellow-green rosettes are bright in appearance and make tight, spreading clusters that are attractive year round. 10cm. AGM. RHS H4.
2 *Sempervivum calcareum* 'Sir William Lawrence' A slowly spreading, mat-forming evergreen succulent with rosettes of grey-green leaves that have maroon tips. Produces a small spire with pink flowers in the summer. 8cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 4a-9b.
3 *Sempervivum* 'Kong' Producing some of the largest rosettes in the genus. Dark, grey-green in appearance. 15cm. RHS H5.



***Begonia* 'Red Tempest'**
A tall, large-leaved *Begonia rex* that reaches up to a metre in height. Mottled, metallic swirls – with leaf veins painted dark green – lead to a deep central crimson patch that is mirrored dramatically at the leaf margins. 1m.

BEGONIA

These tender foliage plants embody a new, light-hearted and exuberant approach to gardening

WORDS **MATT COLLINS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

The fashionability of plants is often, and I hope will always remain, a contentious issue. Many gardeners firmly assert their disregard for plant trends, but fashions are a barometer of prevalence and evolution; without new and divided opinions a subject stagnates. Begonias – particularly foliage begonias – are one such disputed plant, joining dahlias, chrysanthemums and carnations in their rise, fall and return to popularity. Begonias are now very much back in fashion.

To understand why begonias experienced such a swing in favour it is best contextualising them at the junction between a warming climate and an increasing British horticultural interest in tropical foliage. When the late Christopher Lloyd ripped out Great Dixter's ageing Lutyens' rose garden in favour of exotic planting back in the early 1990s, traditional summer bedding had long given way to greener, more naturalistic schemes. Meanwhile, the mixed border – in which foliage plants always featured – prevailed. More recently an appetite has grown for returning brighter colours to the fore; tropical hues from warm climates that perform increasingly well in our warmer summers. So while the stout Semperflorens or wax begonias conjure stale, mid-century bedding schemes, foliage begonias embody the new: the more light-hearted and exuberant mixed planting approach to gardening. Among the cannas and ipomoeas that colour Dixter's exotic garden, are the palmate *Begonia luxurians* and tall, glittery *B.* 'Little Brother Montgomery'. These plants add punch to a scheme, yet do so by their leaves alone.

My own interest in begonias began with the hardy and herbaceous *B. grandis*, but has developed through growing mostly cane types – fleshy, bamboo-stemmed, tender evergreens – indoors. Easily rooted in water and potted on into a light compost, a colleague and I have amassed an expanding collection of the glossy leaved *B.* 'Thurstonii' in the corridors of the Garden Museum in London. They add height, structure, and a gorgeous bronze green that contrasts with houseplant regulars such as Boston and asparagus ferns. I've trialled *B. luxurians*, *B. solananthera* and the eye-catching *B.* 'Silver Jewell' in a similar way with great results. All of these make excellent houseplants when given good air circulation and plenty of indirect sunlight, and are never overwatered. Out in the garden, however, they will truly thrive, attaining new heights through the summer months whether placed conspicuously in containers or dug into a border.

Perhaps another reason begonias have been so easily disregarded in the past is their vast number. The genus contains more than 1,000 species and many more hybrids and cultivars. Thankfully, as far as horticulture is concerned, these can be roughly divided into three manageable groups: cane, tuberous and rhizomatous. The cane type are diverse in appearance, from the metallic, white-fringed *B.* 'Dark Eyes' to polka-dotted *B. maculata*, the angel-wing begonia. While tuberous begonias, which have plump, fleshy roots, are grown for their impressive but tender flowers, rhizomatous begonias are the real foliage showstoppers, sending up a mound of broad, colourful and strikingly patterned leaves from shallow roots. Diminutive flowers arrive in winter but are very much the supporting act: the leaves are enough to brighten the dim corners of the shady conditions they often enjoy. In particular, cultivars of *B. rex* are grown for the radiant, sometimes swirling and often glinting silver tones that one rarely encounters elsewhere, even in the brightest heuchera. Take *B.* 'Red Tempest', for example, its edges shimmer from a rich, wine-blotched centre. In contrast, the muted white of *B.* 'Green Gold' is displayed boldly and unblended, like spilled paint.

Begonias originate from humid, semi- and fully tropical environments that range from South and Central America across to Southern Asia. Most often they're found as forest understorey plants, which explains a comparative tolerance to low light, and therefore their former popularity surge as robust bedding plants. This pigeonholing is now a thing of the past, begonias are moving proudly from bed to splendid border. ❑

• Matt Collins is a garden writer and head gardener at the Garden Museum in London. His recommendations for the best foliage begonias can be found over the next five pages.

PLANT PROFILE

What A genus of tender, flowering perennials made up of more than 1,000 species. Foliage species are becoming increasingly desirable for pots and mixed borders.

Origins Subtropical and tropical areas of South America (*B. luxurians*, *B. solananthera* and *B. maculata* are all from Brazil), Southern Asia, from Nepal to Indo-China (*B. hatacoa*) and central to southern Africa (*B. sutherlandii*).

Season Summer and late autumn before winter frosts; all year round as houseplants.

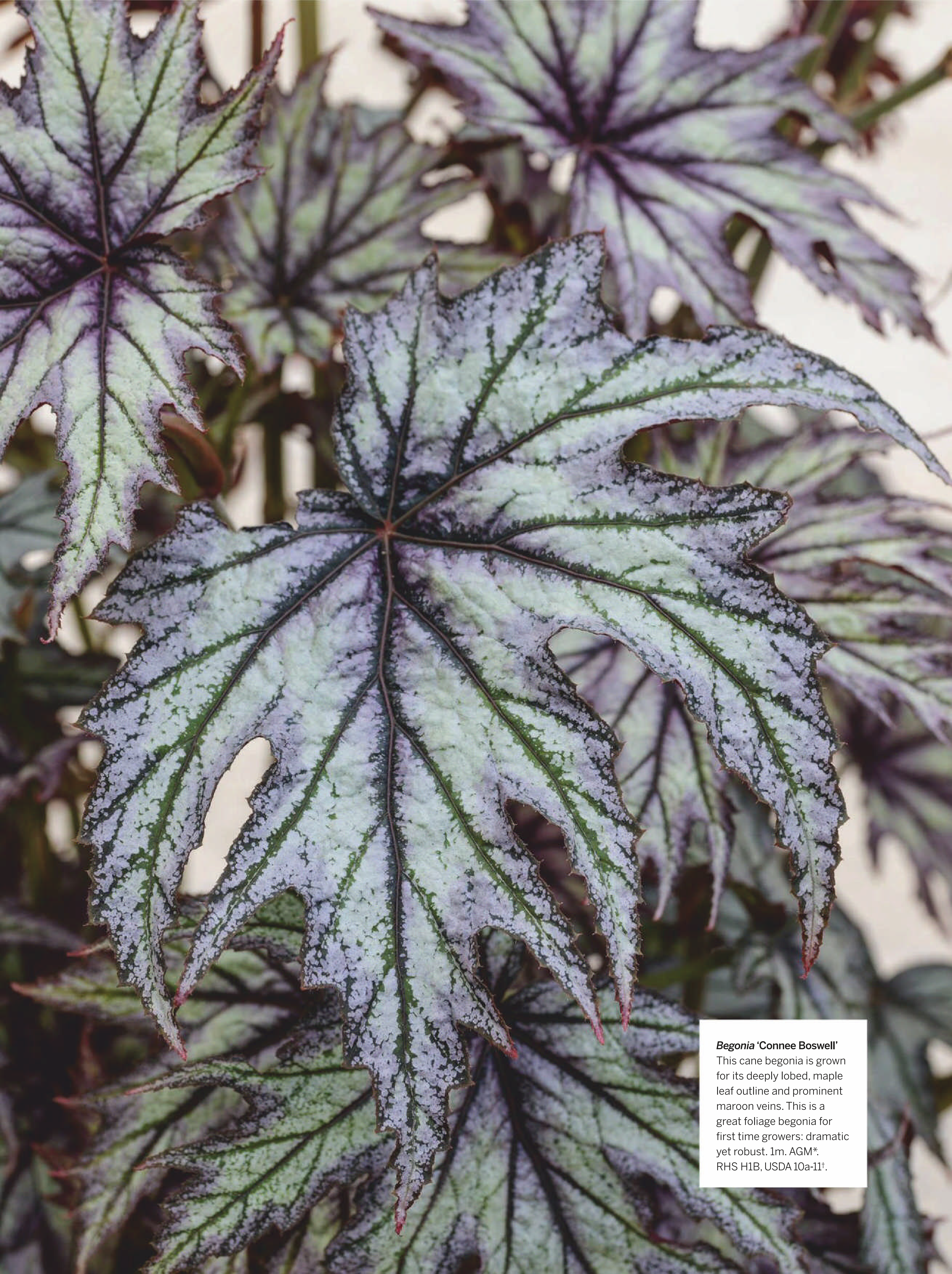
Size From about 20cm up to 1.5m.

Conditions A sheltered position with moist yet well-drained soil. Semi shade and bright, indirect sunlight is preferred.

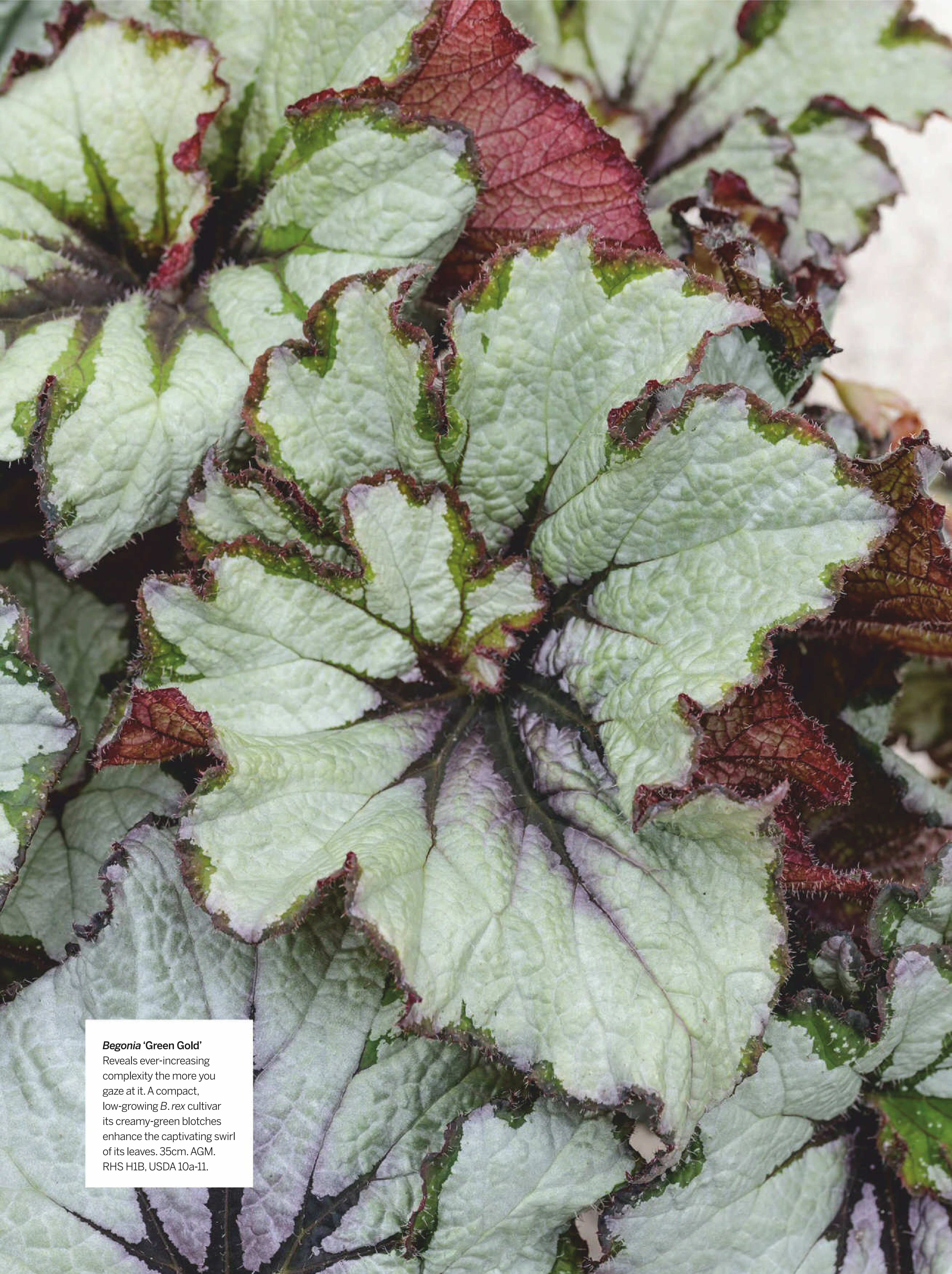
Hardiness Begonias are tender perennials with hardiness ratings of RHS H1B to H2, and are suitable for gardens in USDA zones 10a-12. In a temperate climate, foliage begonias can be grown outside during the summer months, once the risk of frost is over.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

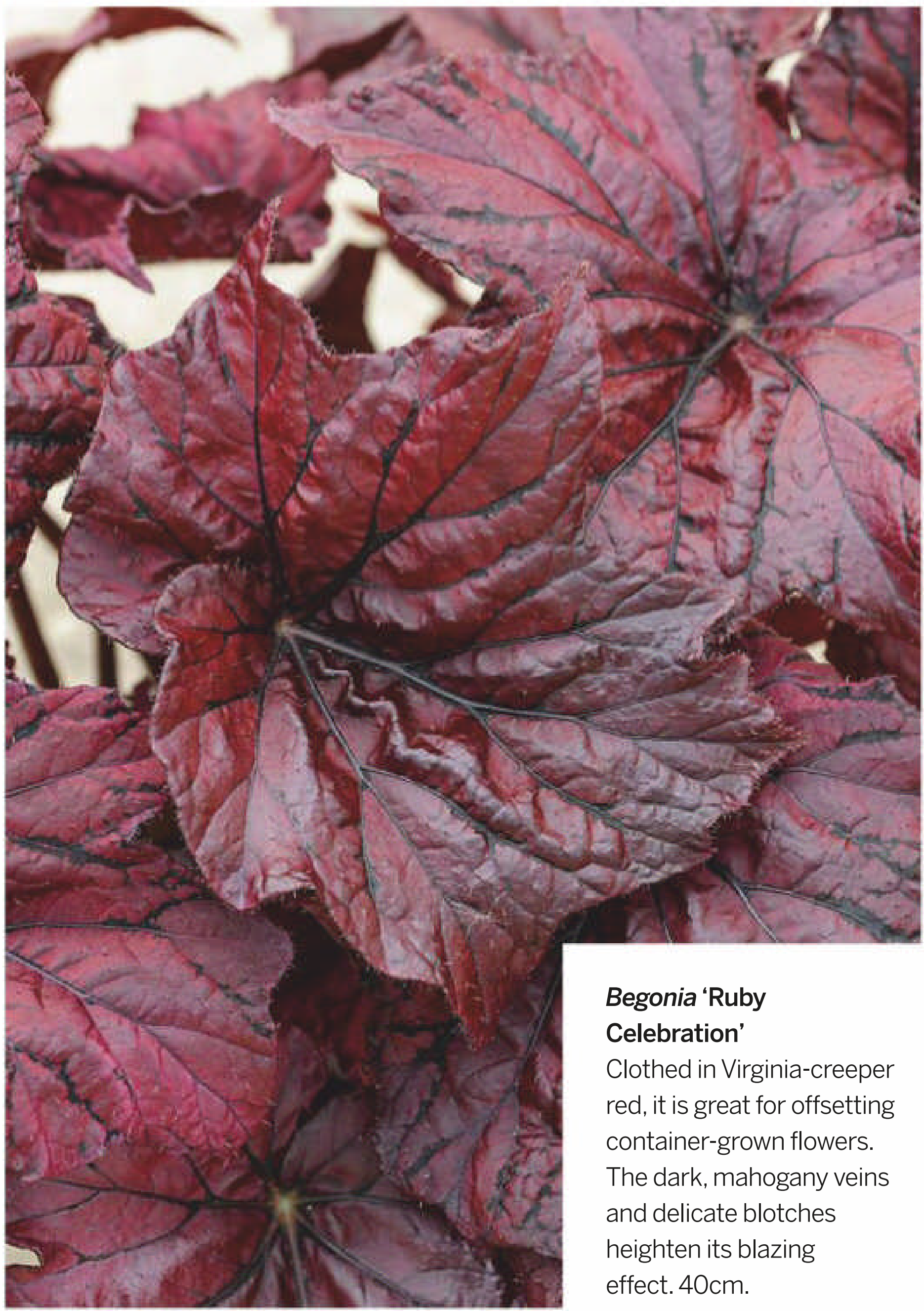
Dibleys Nurseries
Dibleys in North Wales, where these images were taken, is a multi RHS Gold Award-winning nursery that specialises in begonias and streptocarpus.
dibleys.com



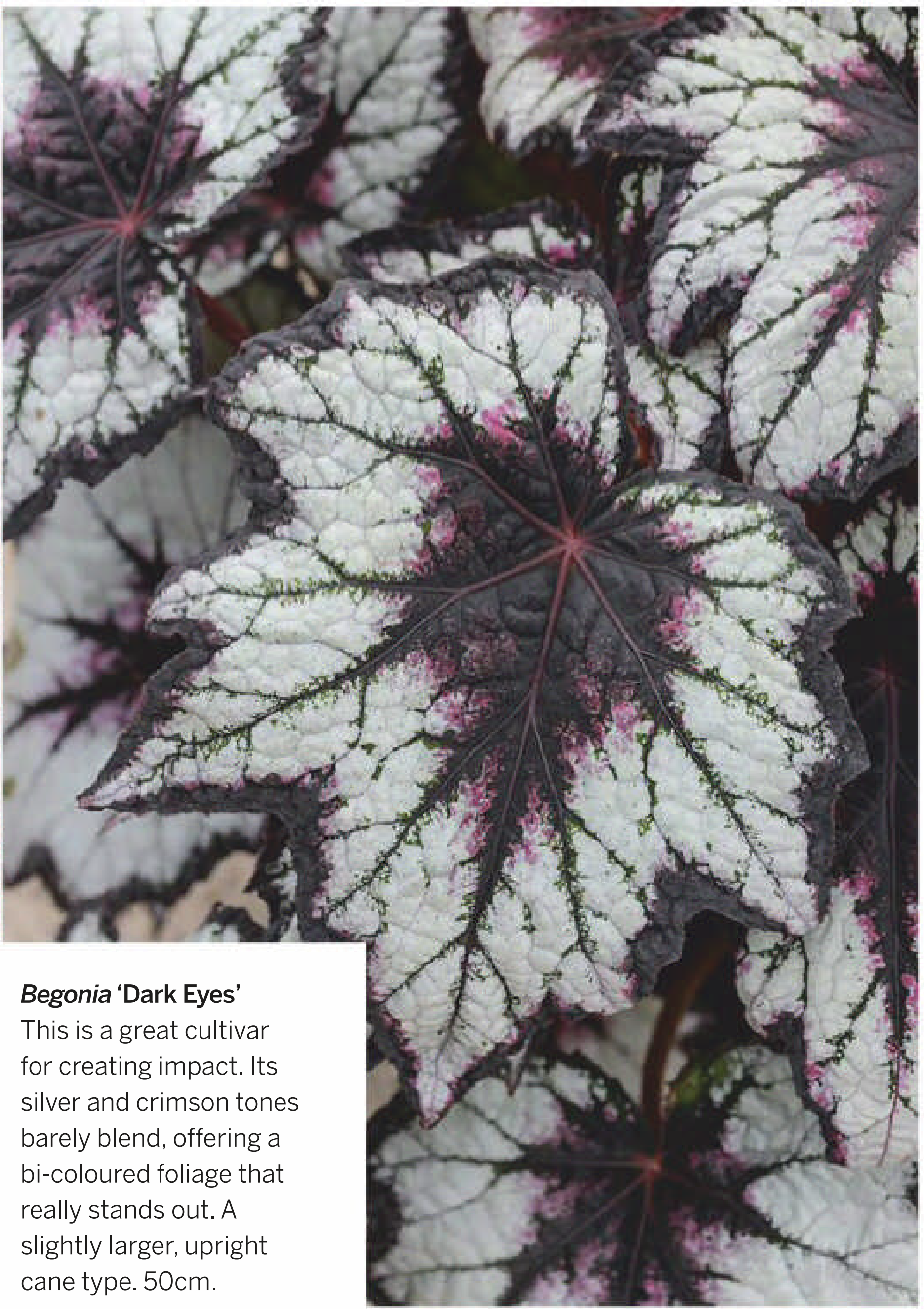
***Begonia* 'Connee Boswell'**
This cane begonia is grown for its deeply lobed, maple leaf outline and prominent maroon veins. This is a great foliage begonia for first time growers: dramatic yet robust. 1m. AGM*. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11†.



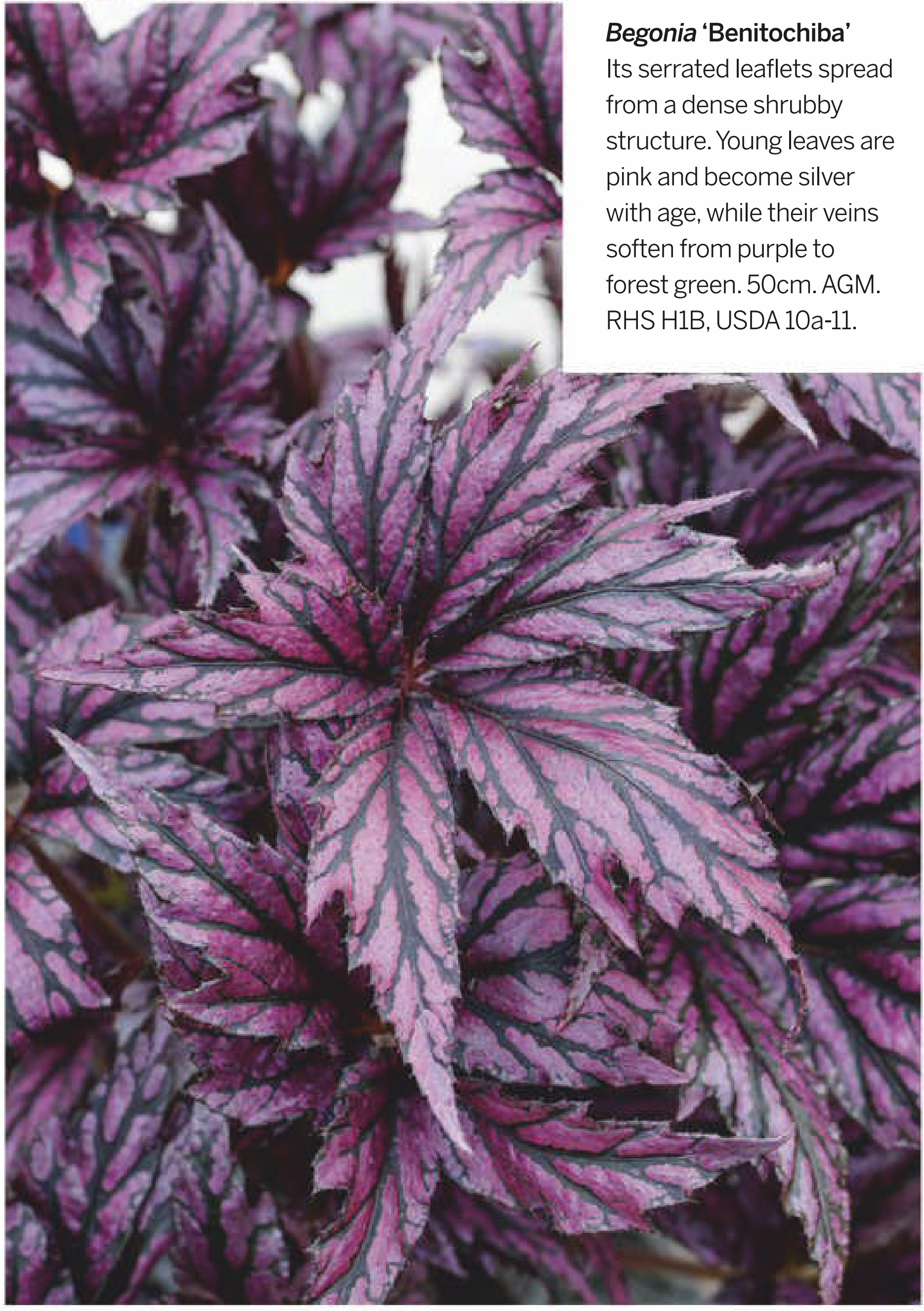
***Begonia* 'Green Gold'**
Reveals ever-increasing complexity the more you gaze at it. A compact, low-growing *B. rex* cultivar its creamy-green blotches enhance the captivating swirl of its leaves. 35cm. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.



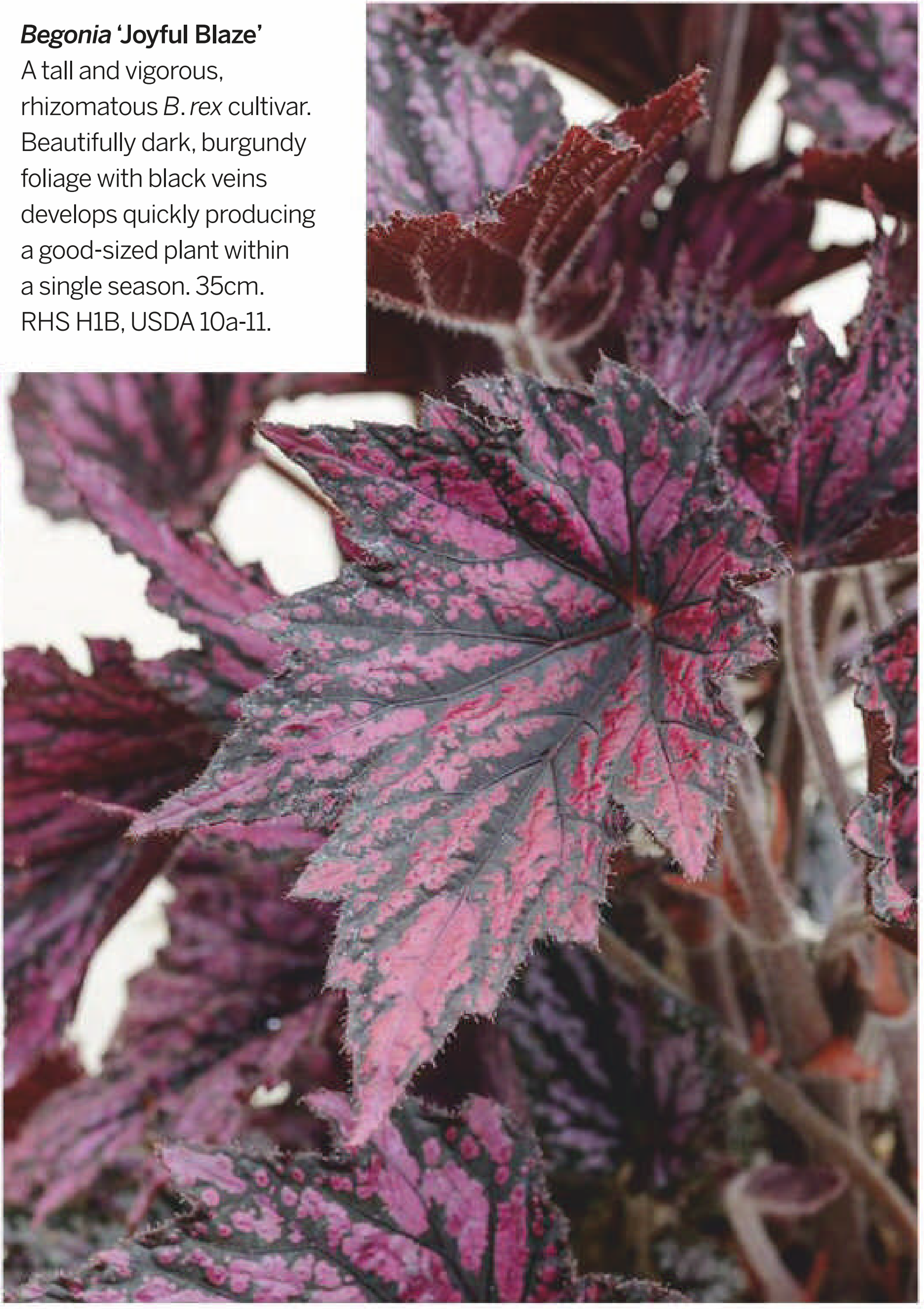
***Begonia* 'Ruby Celebration'**
Clothed in Virginia-creeper red, it is great for offsetting container-grown flowers. The dark, mahogany veins and delicate blotches heighten its blazing effect. 40cm.



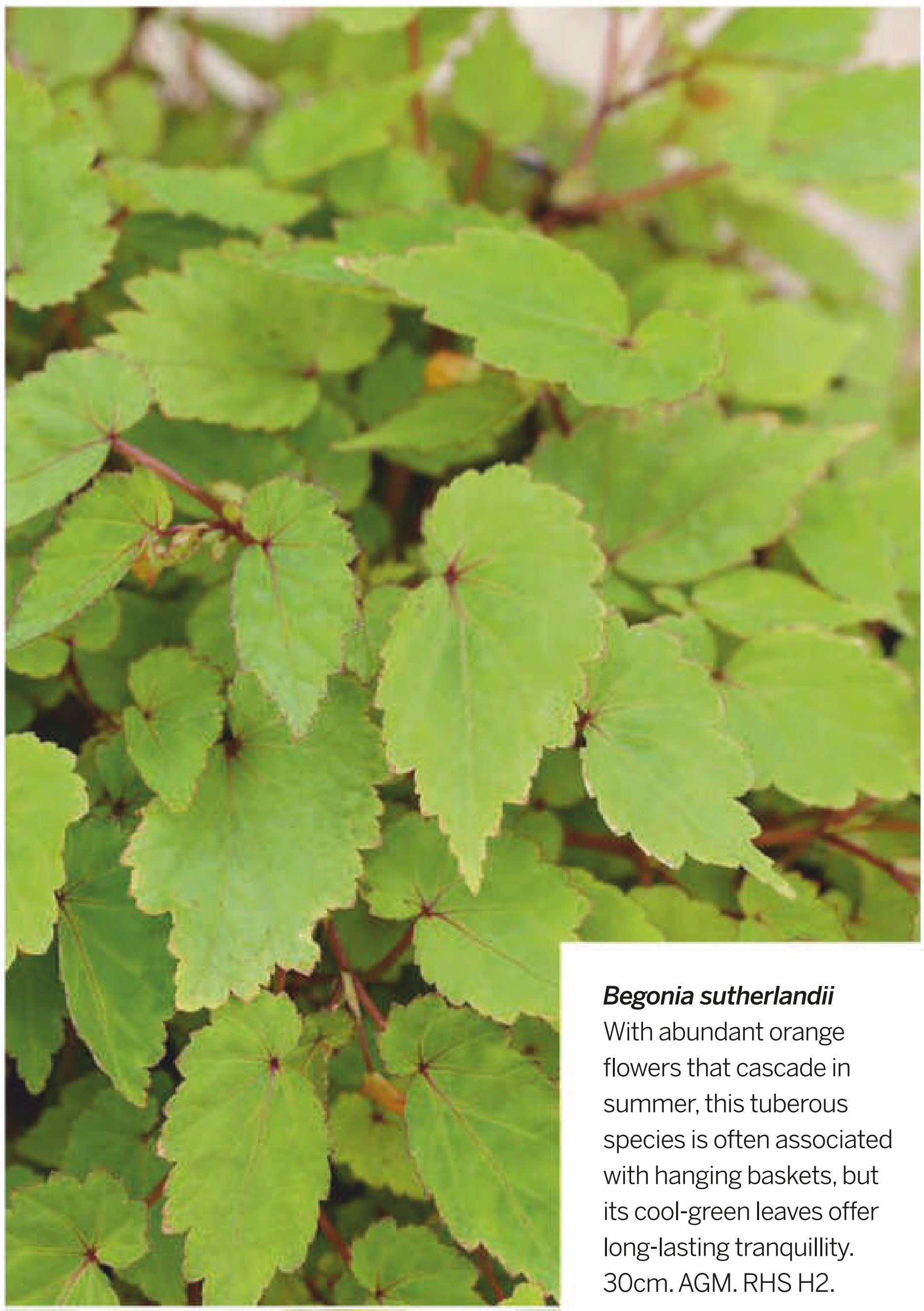
***Begonia* 'Dark Eyes'**
This is a great cultivar for creating impact. Its silver and crimson tones barely blend, offering a bi-coloured foliage that really stands out. A slightly larger, upright cane type. 50cm.



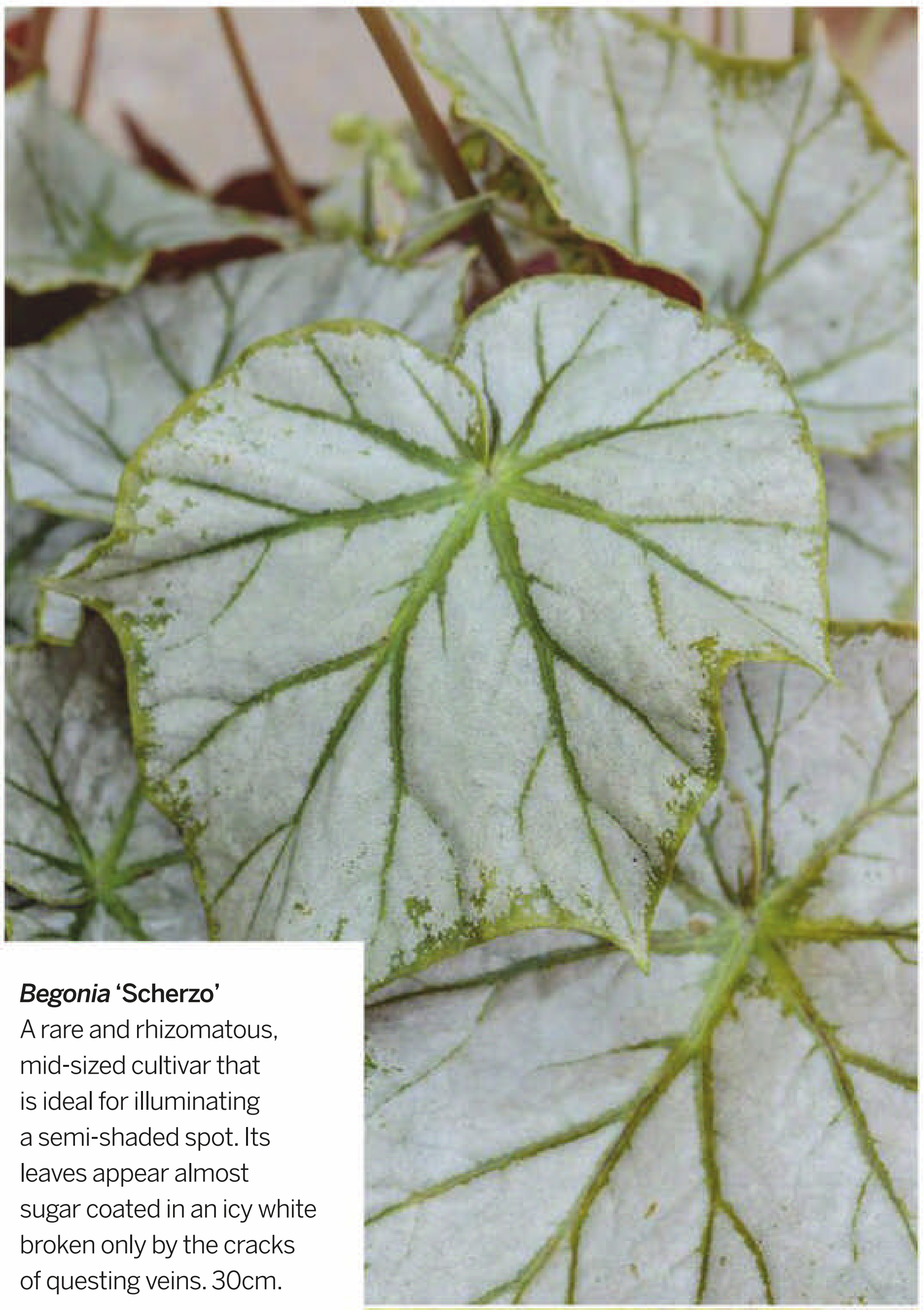
***Begonia* 'Benitochiba'**
Its serrated leaflets spread from a dense shrubby structure. Young leaves are pink and become silver with age, while their veins soften from purple to forest green. 50cm. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.



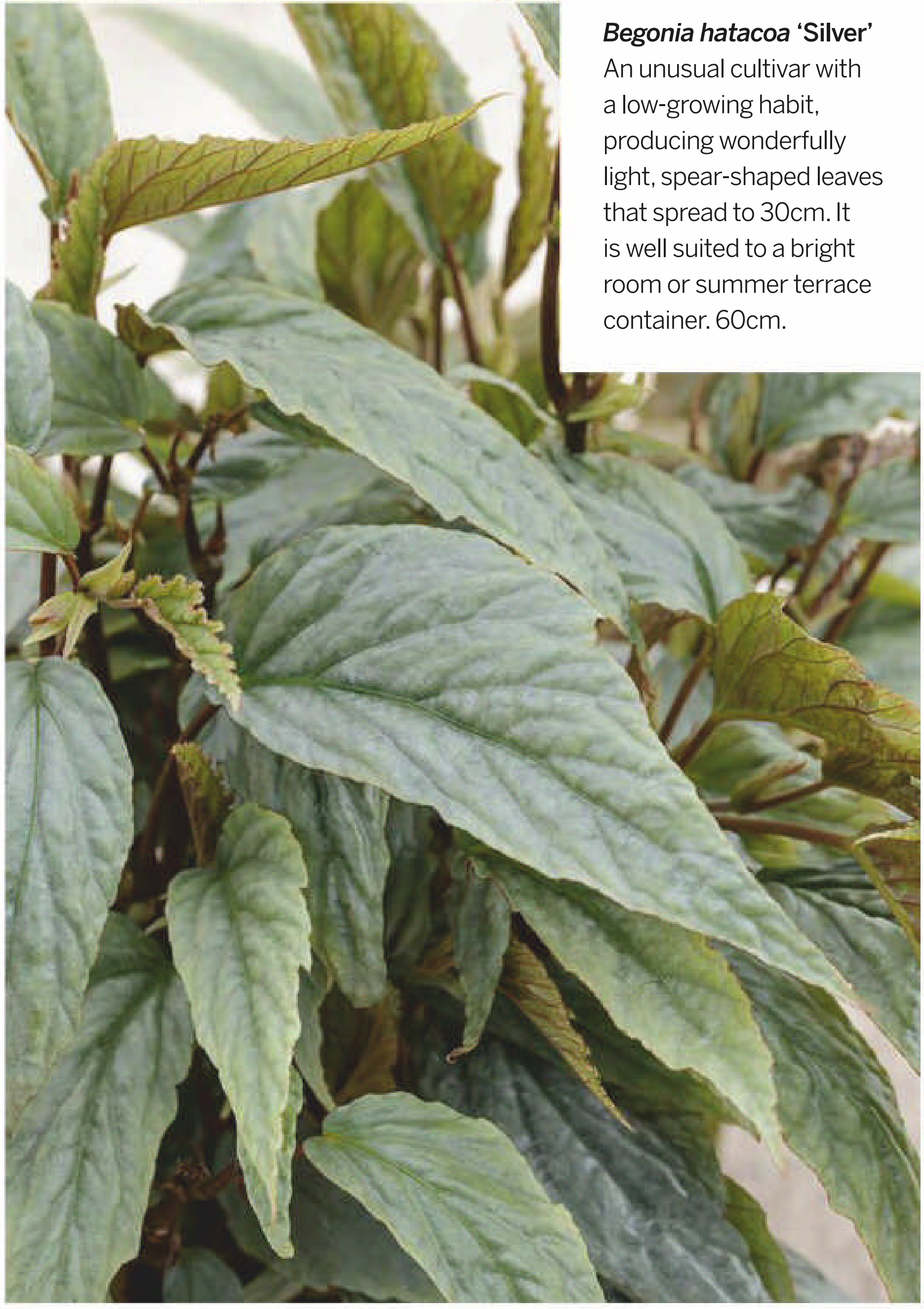
***Begonia* 'Joyful Blaze'**
A tall and vigorous, rhizomatous *B. rex* cultivar. Beautifully dark, burgundy foliage with black veins develops quickly producing a good-sized plant within a single season. 35cm. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.



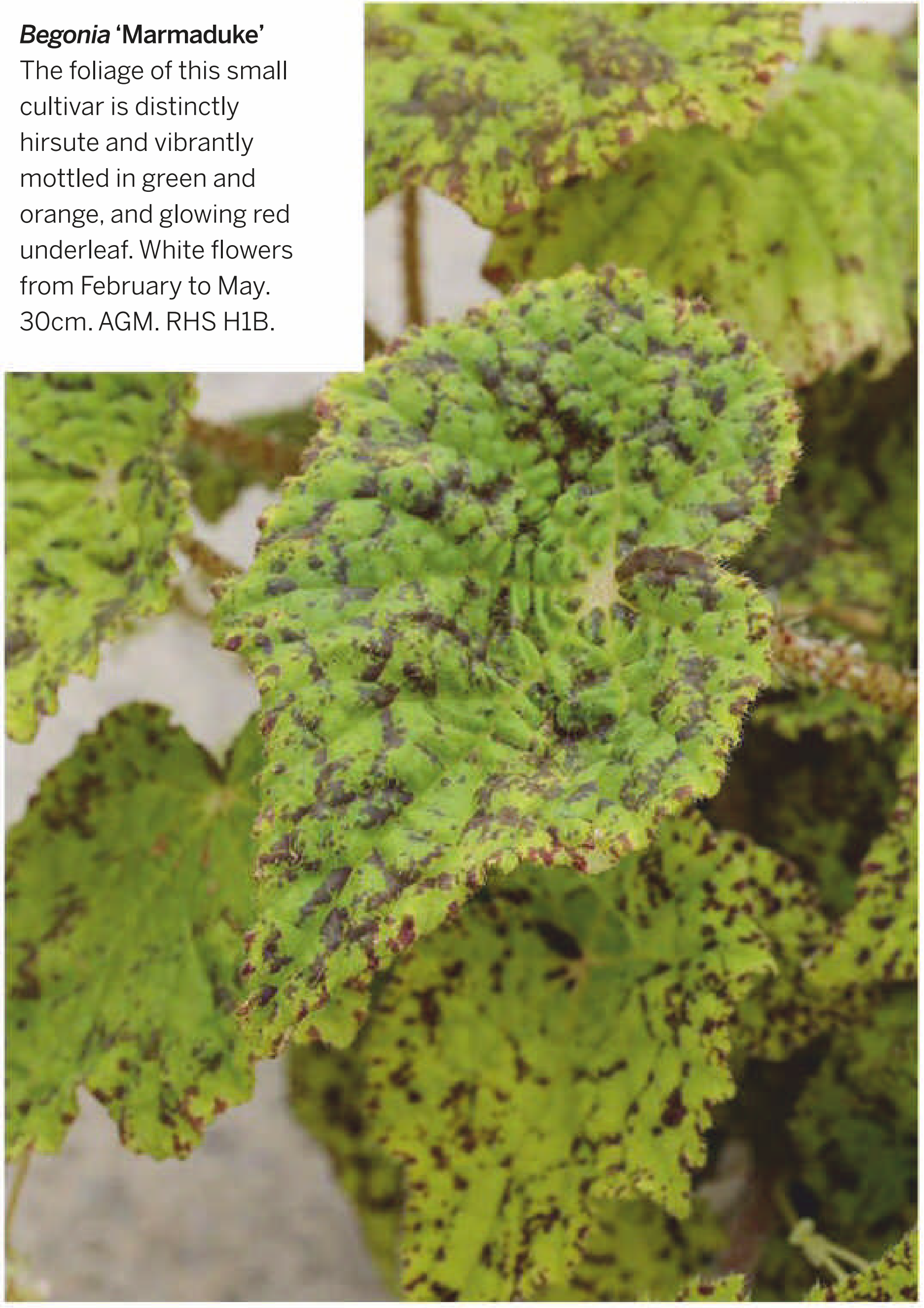
Begonia sutherlandii
With abundant orange flowers that cascade in summer, this tuberous species is often associated with hanging baskets, but its cool-green leaves offer long-lasting tranquillity. 30cm. AGM. RHS H2.



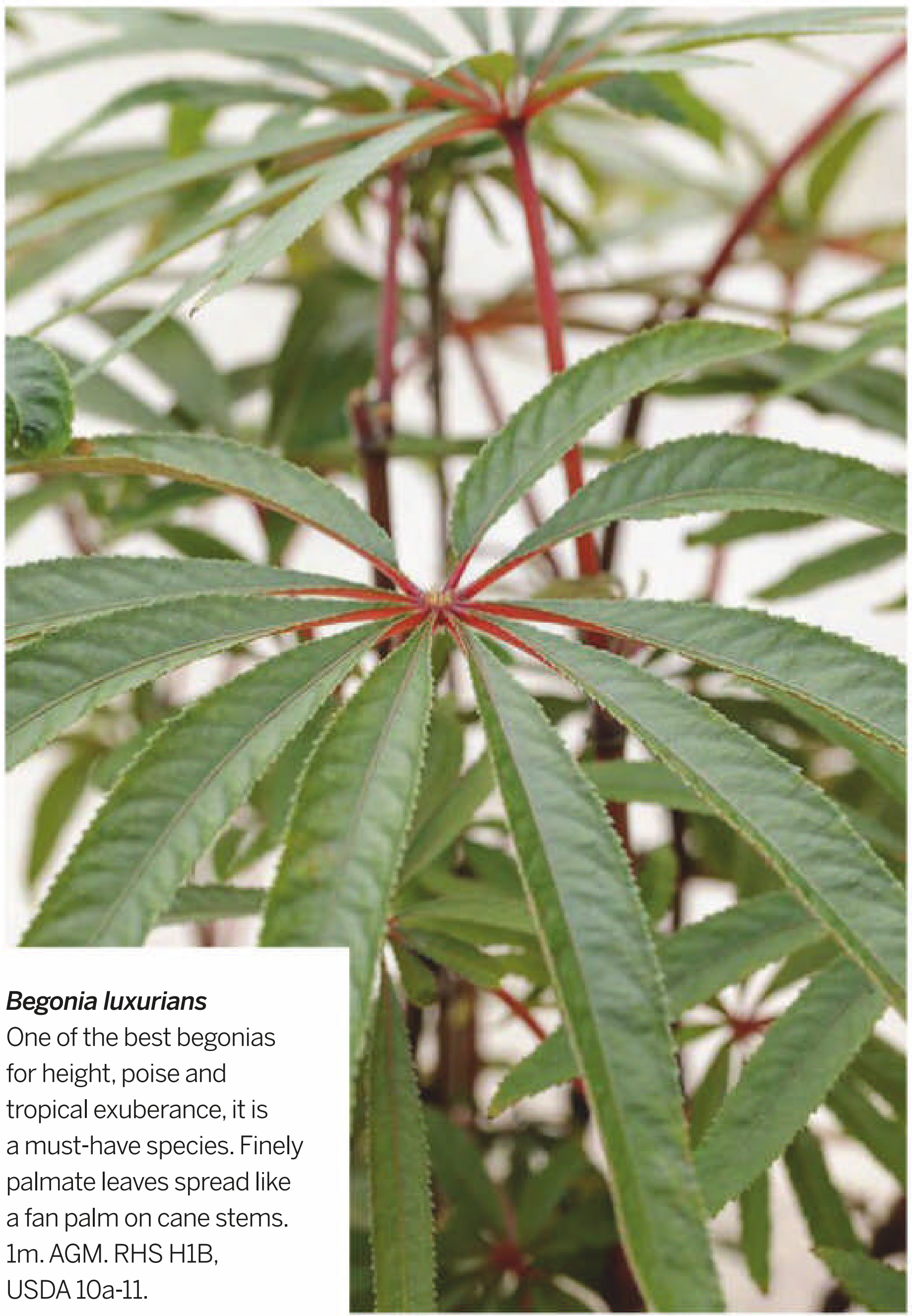
***Begonia* 'Scherzo'**
A rare and rhizomatous, mid-sized cultivar that is ideal for illuminating a semi-shaded spot. Its leaves appear almost sugar coated in an icy white broken only by the cracks of questing veins. 30cm.



***Begonia hatacoa* 'Silver'**
An unusual cultivar with a low-growing habit, producing wonderfully light, spear-shaped leaves that spread to 30cm. It is well suited to a bright room or summer terrace container. 60cm.

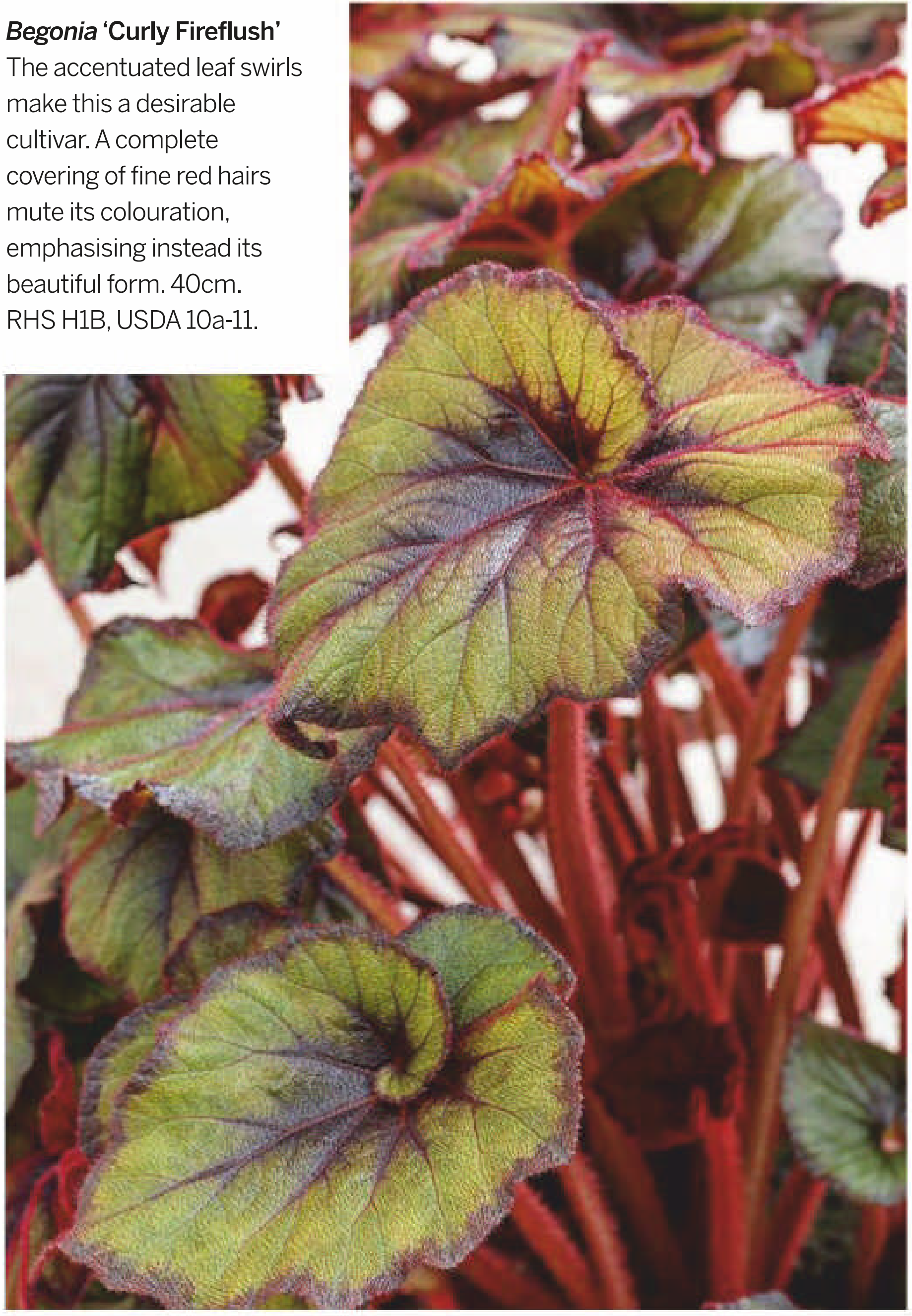


***Begonia* 'Marmaduke'**
The foliage of this small cultivar is distinctly hirsute and vibrantly mottled in green and orange, and glowing red underleaf. White flowers from February to May. 30cm. AGM. RHS H1B.



Begonia luxurians
One of the best begonias for height, poise and tropical exuberance, it is a must-have species. Finely palmate leaves spread like a fan palm on cane stems. 1m. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.

***Begonia* 'Curly Fireflush'**
The accentuated leaf swirls make this a desirable cultivar. A complete covering of fine red hairs mute its colouration, emphasising instead its beautiful form. 40cm. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-11.



Cultivation

Within the rhizomatous and cane type begonias, cultivation requirements – particularly with regard to levels of sun exposure – will vary. There are, however, some consistent practices that ensure healthy plants. Growing foliage begonias in a pot couldn't be easier, whether as part of an indoor display or for the summer on the doorstep or terrace. The key principle is: get the potting mix right at the start, and you're unlikely to encounter many issues. Essentially, soil should be light and airy but rich with organic matter. Adding leaf mould or homemade compost to ordinary potting-on compost will give plants a good and lasting source of nutrients – they're not big feeders, and so a nutritionally enriched growing medium supersedes frequent doses of fertiliser. Mixing in vermiculite or grit will help with drainage, which is also very important. Begonias want to be moist but never drenched: water regularly, but allow the soil to dry out, at least in the top third of the pot, before replenishing. This will help prevent sciarid fly.

Good hygiene will go a long way in keeping up appearances: snip away dead or diseased leaves, avoiding the build up of fungus, such as powdery mildew, which can affect begonias. You may find occasional crisping at the leaf edges with plants grown indoors. This is usually a sign that conditions are too dry – as is often the case in a domestic setting – and a little water misting may be necessary to replicate the humid conditions the plants are accustomed to. A good tip for houseplant cultivation is to group plants together, rather than spacing them out across a room. The cosiness provides additional warmth and traps moisture when plants are watered.

Outdoors in the ground, aim for soil conditions similar to those in pots: by adding lots of drainage with, for example, horticultural grit to avoid water-logging, and plenty of incorporated organic matter, which in turn will help with aeration. Rhizomatous begonias can handle bright sunlight but perform well in semi shade, whether underplanting taller greenery, mixed into a burgeoning border or lining a narrow, well-trodden passageway where they will be enjoyed throughout the summer. Keep a close eye on weather forecasts and ensure plants are lifted and brought indoors well before the first frost. This is the ideal time for a health check up and a general service: excess soil can be carefully washed from the roots and replaced afresh; spent or curling leaves should be chopped away and a good pot chosen for overwintering indoors. Repot no more than a couple of sizes larger than the rootball to avoid sitting water.

Finally, propagating begonias is wonderfully straightforward. The quickest and most effective method is by taking summer stem cuttings of between 3-5cm, and rooting them either in water or moist compost: no rooting powder necessary. Though not essential to growth, you can maintain humidity while plants are getting established by covering with a transparent container or polythene bag. Rooted cuttings can then be easily transferred and grown on in individual pots.

Where to buy and see

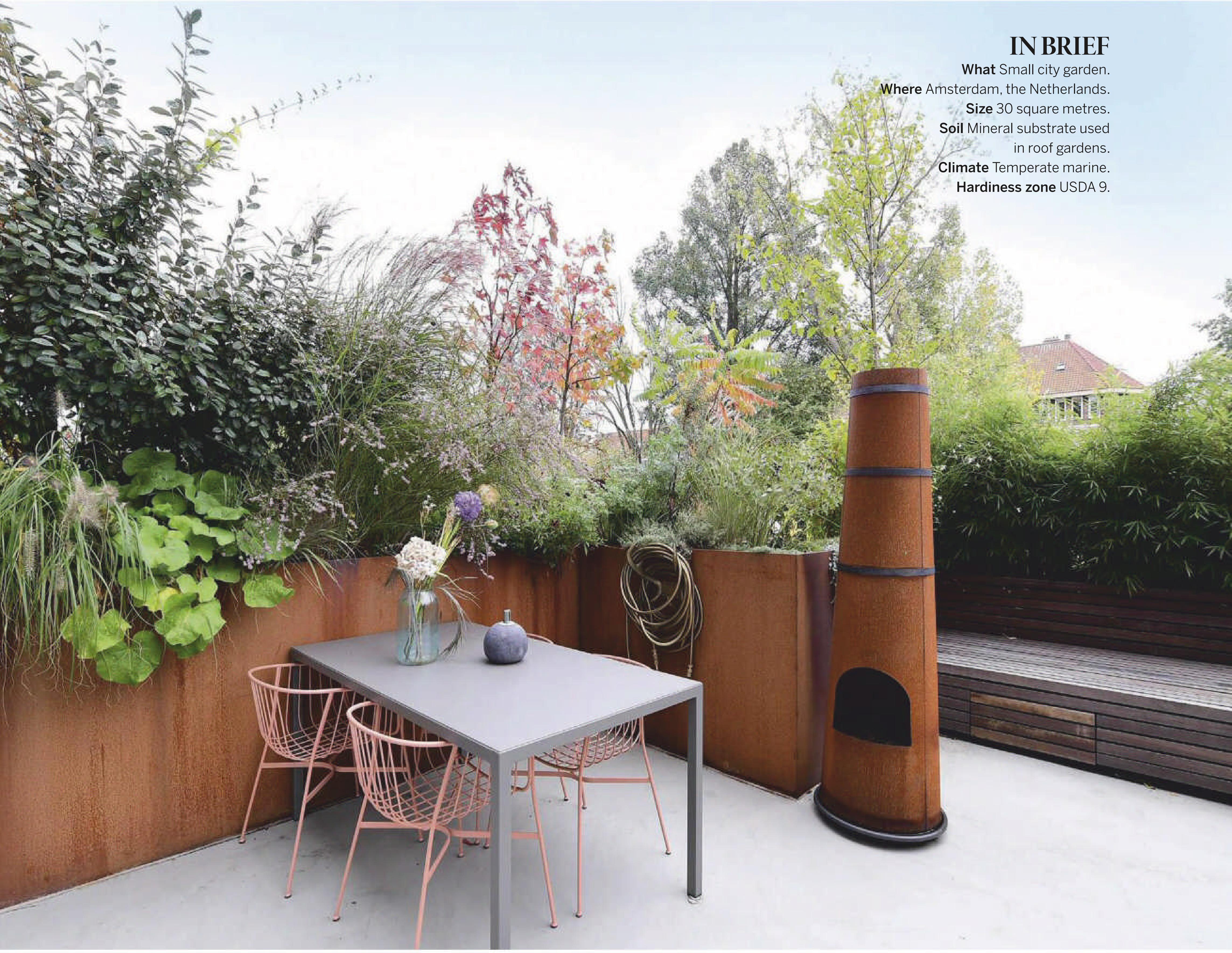
- **Dibleys Nurseries**
  Llanelidan, Ruthin,
  Denbighshire LL15 2LG.
  Tel 01978 790677,
  dibleys.com
- **Farmyard Nursery**
  Dol Llan Road, Llandysul,
  Carmarthenshire SA44 4RL.
  Tel 01559 363389,
  farmyardnurseries.co.uk
- **Glasgow Botanic Gardens***
  730 Great Western Road,
  Glasgow G12 0UE.
  Tel 0141 276 1640,
  glasgowbotanicgardens.com
- **Great Dixter**
  Northiam, Rye. East Sussex
  N31 6PH. Tel 01797 252878,
  greatdixter.co.uk

*National Collection holder

Faced with the challenge of creating a city garden that would offer both privacy and separate spaces for seating and eating, designer Erik Funneman has used deep Corten steel planters to fill the tiny space with green and reference the district's recent industrial past

City limits

WORDS **JONNY BRUCE** PHOTOGRAPHS **SIETSKE DE VRIES**

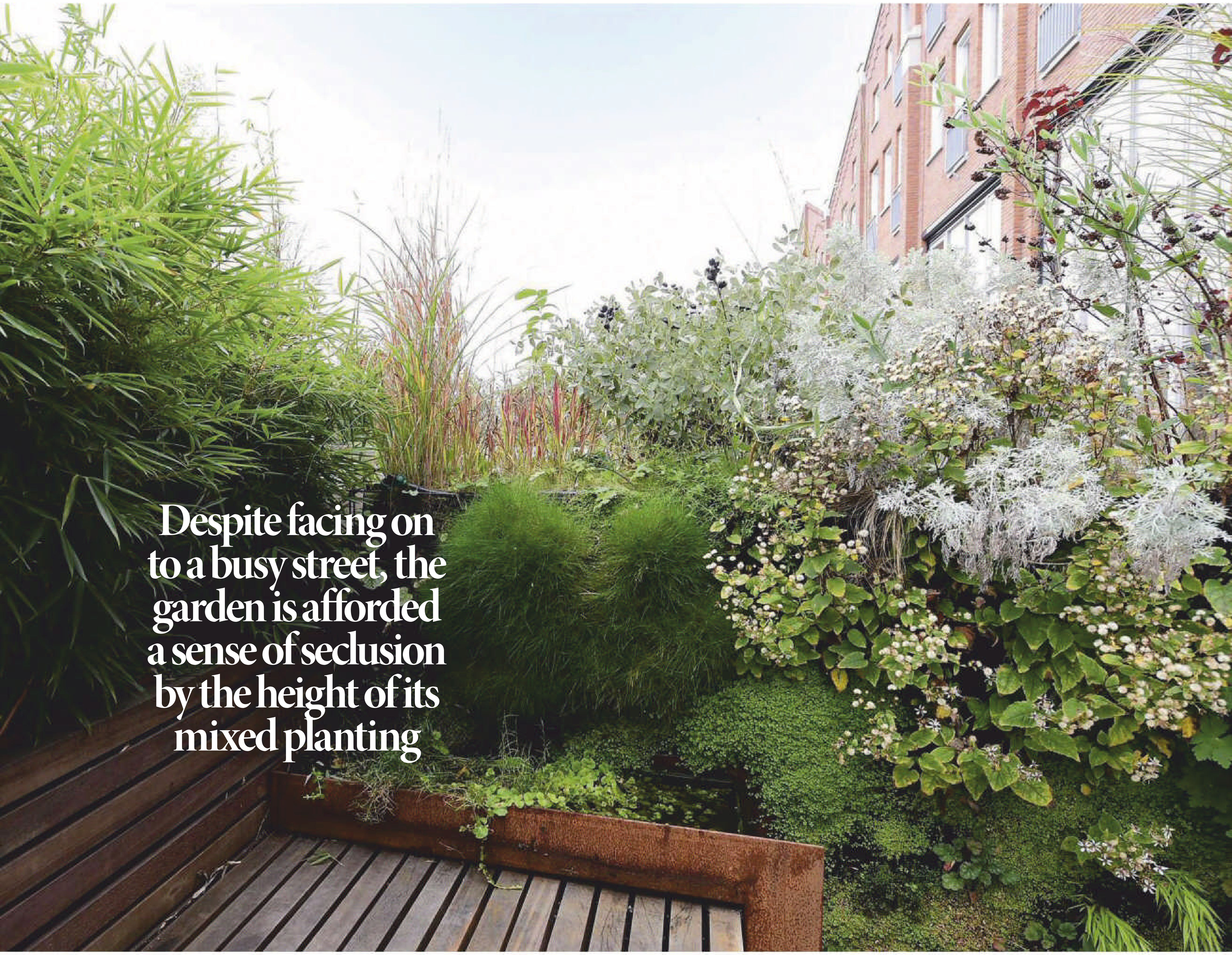


IN BRIEF

What Small city garden.
Where Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Size 30 square metres.
Soil Mineral substrate used in roof gardens.
Climate Temperate marine.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.

Below left The rusted finish of Corten steel clads the main planting area and is repeated in the portable wood burner.

Below The silvery foliage of *Baptisia* and *Artemisia* top the green wall, with *Soleirolia soleirolii* flowing down to the rill and connected pool. A dense hedge of *Fargesia rufa* provides privacy and helps to reduce noise from the street below.

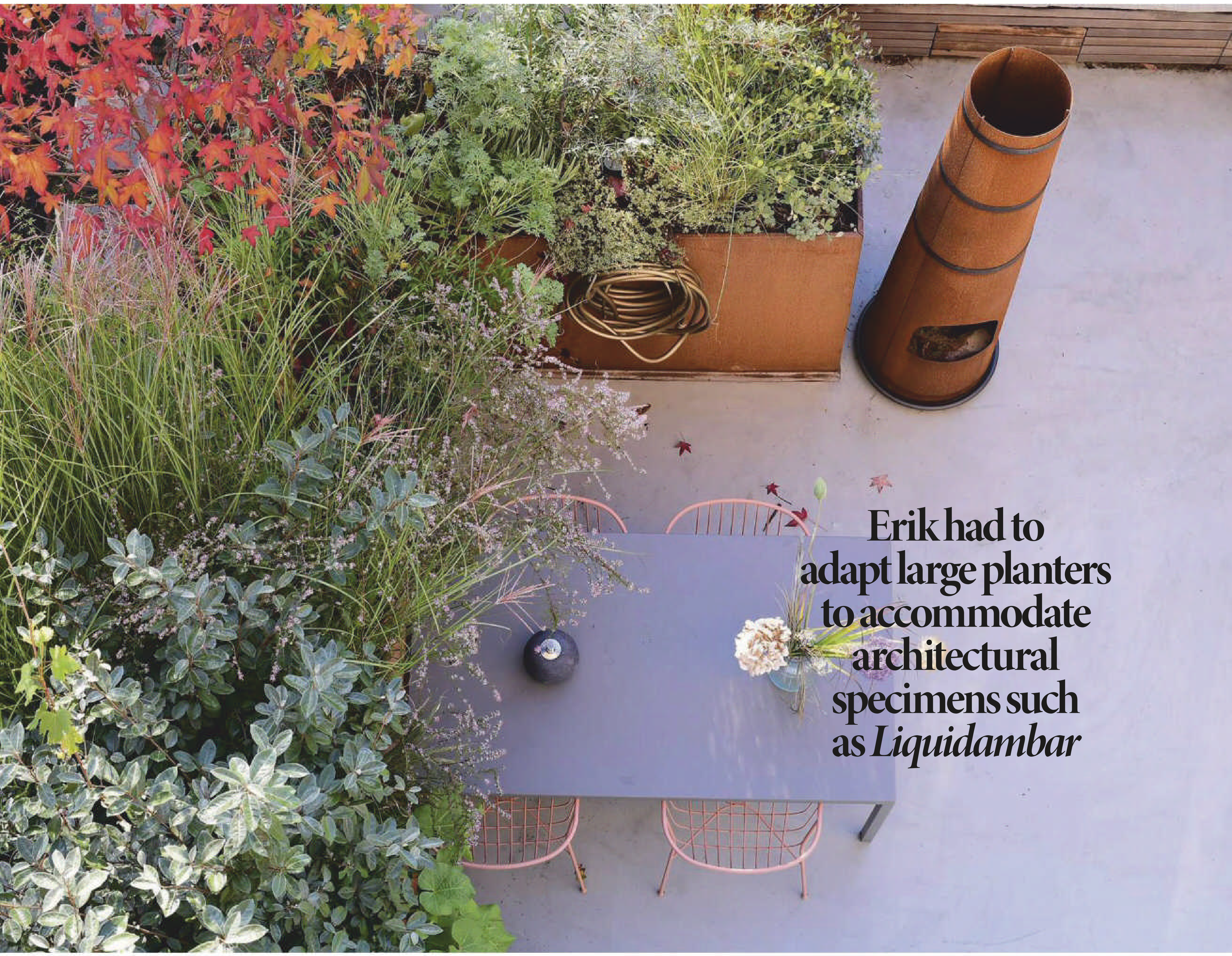


Despite facing on to a busy street, the garden is afforded a sense of seclusion by the height of its mixed planting

Below A shared, large, Corten steel planter marks the boundary between neighbouring gardens, with tall shrubs, including *Liquidambar styraciflua*, providing privacy for both gardens. The fiery tones of the *Liquidambar* contrast well with the silver mass of *Elaeagnus* x *submacrophylla*, while the feathery flowers of *Miscanthus sinensis* create a soft texture.

Oostpoort is a modern residential area in east Amsterdam. Once dominated by the Oostergasfabriek, or gas works, it is now a mix of smart, red-brick townhouses and apartments that are popular with young professionals and families. Nestled among this mix of gentrified buildings is a small modern garden that speaks to the industrial character of the neighbourhood's recent past. "Unusually, I built this garden myself," admits designer Erik Funneman, whose busy Utrecht-based design practice means he rarely has time to do the construction. Trained as a landscape architect, Erik has been designing mainly urban gardens across the Netherlands for the past ten years, but this bite-sized project – facilitated by a willing client – allowed him to engage with his love of interior design and its finer details.

Despite facing on to a busy street, this terrace garden is afforded a sense of seclusion by the height of its mixed planting of small trees, perennials and tall grasses. The garden is raised above the street level and with no natural soil, so Erik had to adapt large planters to accommodate architectural specimens such as *Liquidambar*, *Rhus*, *Cotinus* and *Hippophae*. To provide a sufficient rooting depth for these larger woody plants ▷



Erik had to adapt large planters to accommodate architectural specimens such as *Liquidambar*

6 key plants

1 ***Cerastium tomentosum*** The intense silver foliage of this European alpine native contrasts well with the orange rust of the Corten steel. Requires full sun but is otherwise easy on poor soil, its rhizomatous habit allows it to trail attractively. 30cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-7b†.

2 ***Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra'** Emerges fresh-green, tipped with dark red, but as the season progresses takes on a rich burgundy hue – especially effective when backlit. 60cm. RHS H4, USDA 5a-9b.

3 ***Baptisia australis* 'Caspian Blue'** False indigos are useful long-lived and drought-tolerant perennials, and there are many exciting new cultivars. This one is a fantastic selection. It produces spires of intense-blue pea flowers above a compact mound of glaucous foliage. Its flowers are relatively fleeting but the dark seedpods give months of interest. 1m. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

4 ***Cosmos atrosanguineus*** A tender, tuberous perennial with red velvety blooms that have the distinct scent of spiced chocolate. Originally from Mexico, this cosmos is not long lived but the tubers can be treated and stored like those of a dahlia. 90cm. RHS H3, USDA 7a-9b.

5 ***Eurybia divaricata*** This tough and reliable woodland aster produces a mass of white flowers above dark wiry stems in autumn. Copes with a range of soils even in dark shade. 60cm. RHS H7, USDA 3a-8b.

6 ***Hylotelephium* 'Matrona'** A deserved popular stonecrop that was selected by German nurseryman Ewald Hugin for its vigour but also for its unusual dusty colour. The succulent leaves have a slatey purple tinge that carries into the dark-pink flowers. Strong stems make for attractive seedheads, which extends the season. 70cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available..

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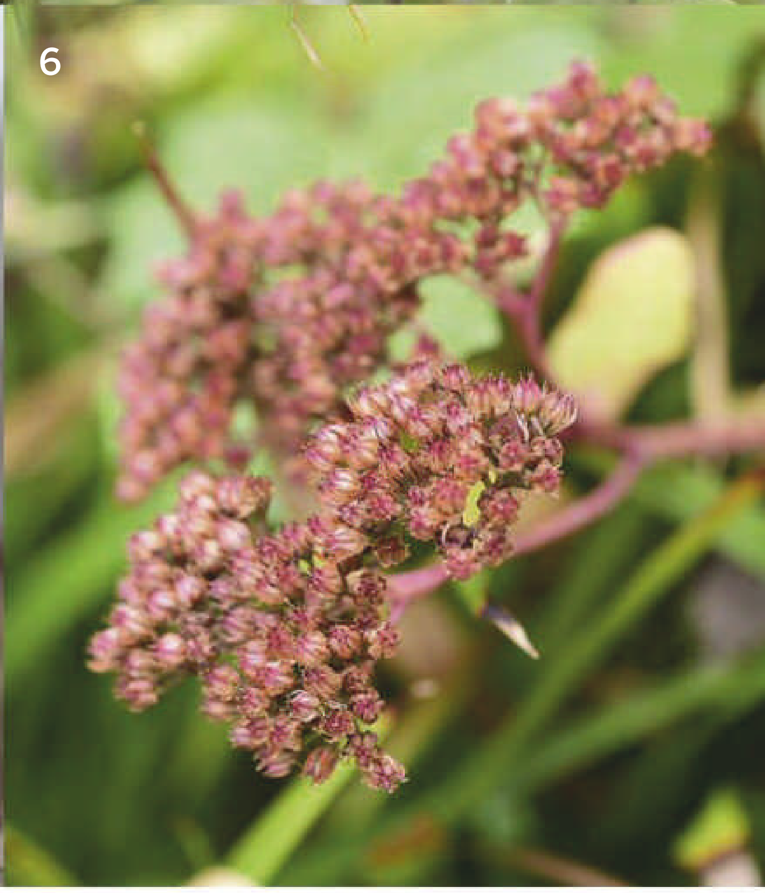


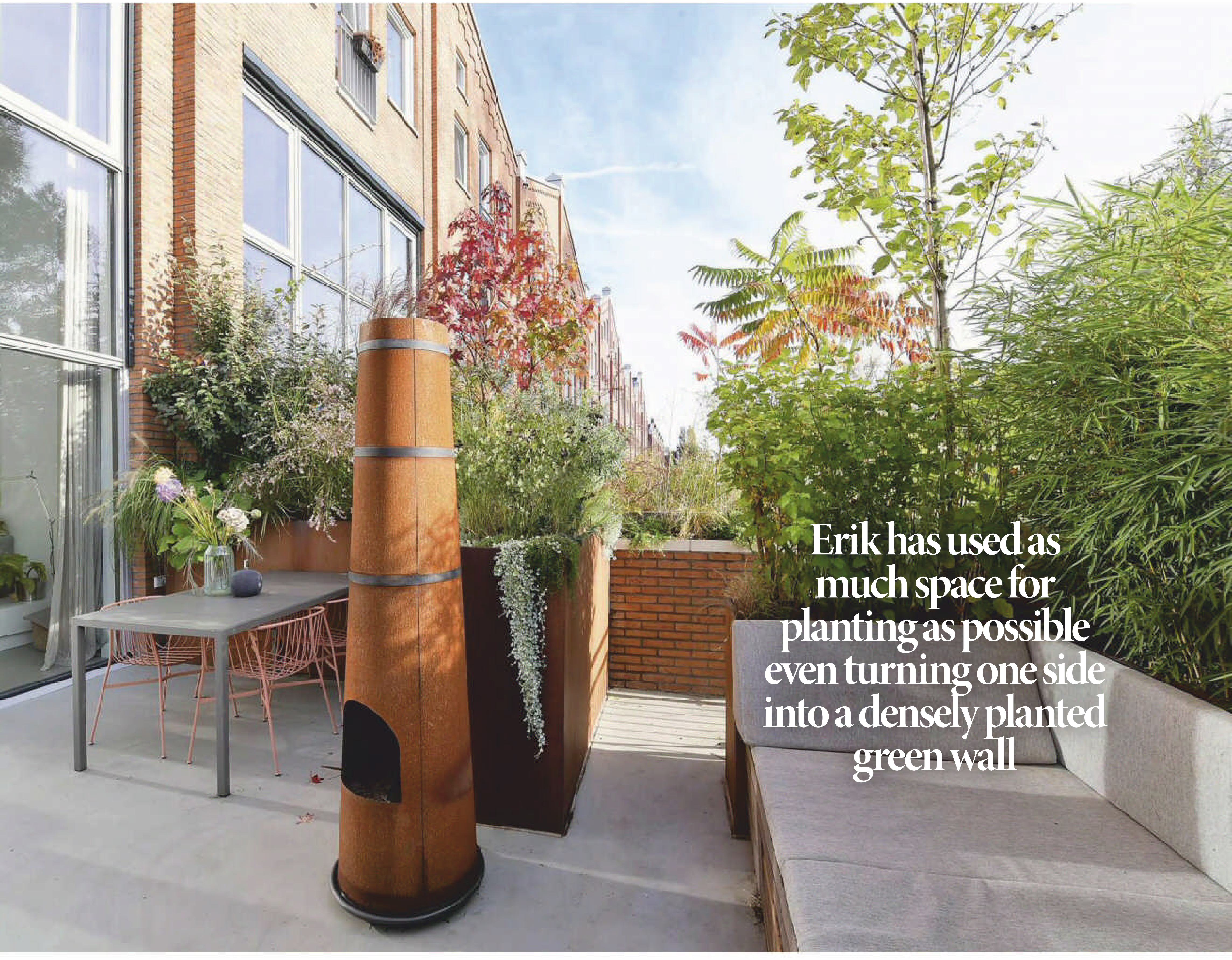
6

Below The narrow entrance to the garden, with tall plants on either side, helps create both an unexpected reveal and the illusion of expanding space – both useful devices in such a small garden. The L-shaped planter offers plenty of space for planting and also helps divide the tiny terrace into separate areas for eating and relaxing.

▷ Erik used a lightweight substrate consisting of 70 per cent crushed lava rock and 30 per cent organic material, commonly used for roof gardens.

The initial planting plan for this design shows a simpler design incorporating the dark-leaved *Albizia julibrissin* 'Summer Chocolate' as the main structural element. But as luck would have it, the next door neighbours were so taken with Erik's design that they employed him to transform their own terrace at the same time. This expanded the planting potential as it effectively doubled the planting area that divides the two gardens. Solid masses of *Elaeagnus* x *submacrophylla* and *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' ensure an appropriate degree of privacy while retaining a neighbourly appreciation for this shared planting.

The inspiration for the Corten steel finish and the statement wood burner was the neighbourhood's industrial past. Erik was keen to reflect the Corten steel's warmth in the planting with the soft orange of pheasant's tail grass *Anemanthele lessoniana* and the orange berries of *Hippophae rhamnoides*, or sea buckthorn. The silver foliage of this willow-like shrub is particularly effective against the rust and is a tone repeated throughout the planting with trailing *Cerastium tomentosum*, *Elaeagnus*, variegated *Miscanthus* and *Festuca glauca*. While the fresh green of the bamboo *Fargesia rufa* and other foliage plants dominates for most of the year, in autumn the *Liquidambar* and *Rhus* add their fiery hues

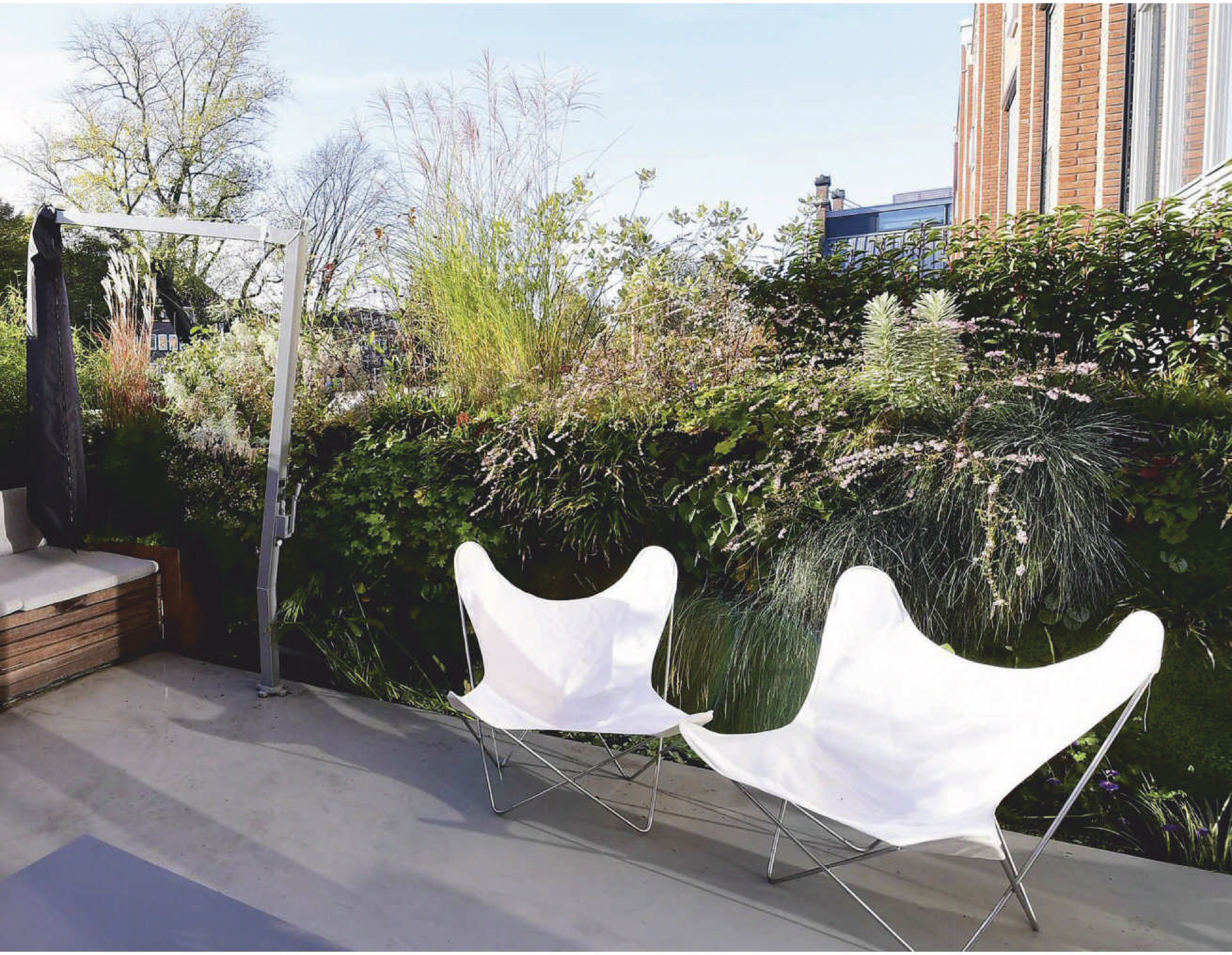


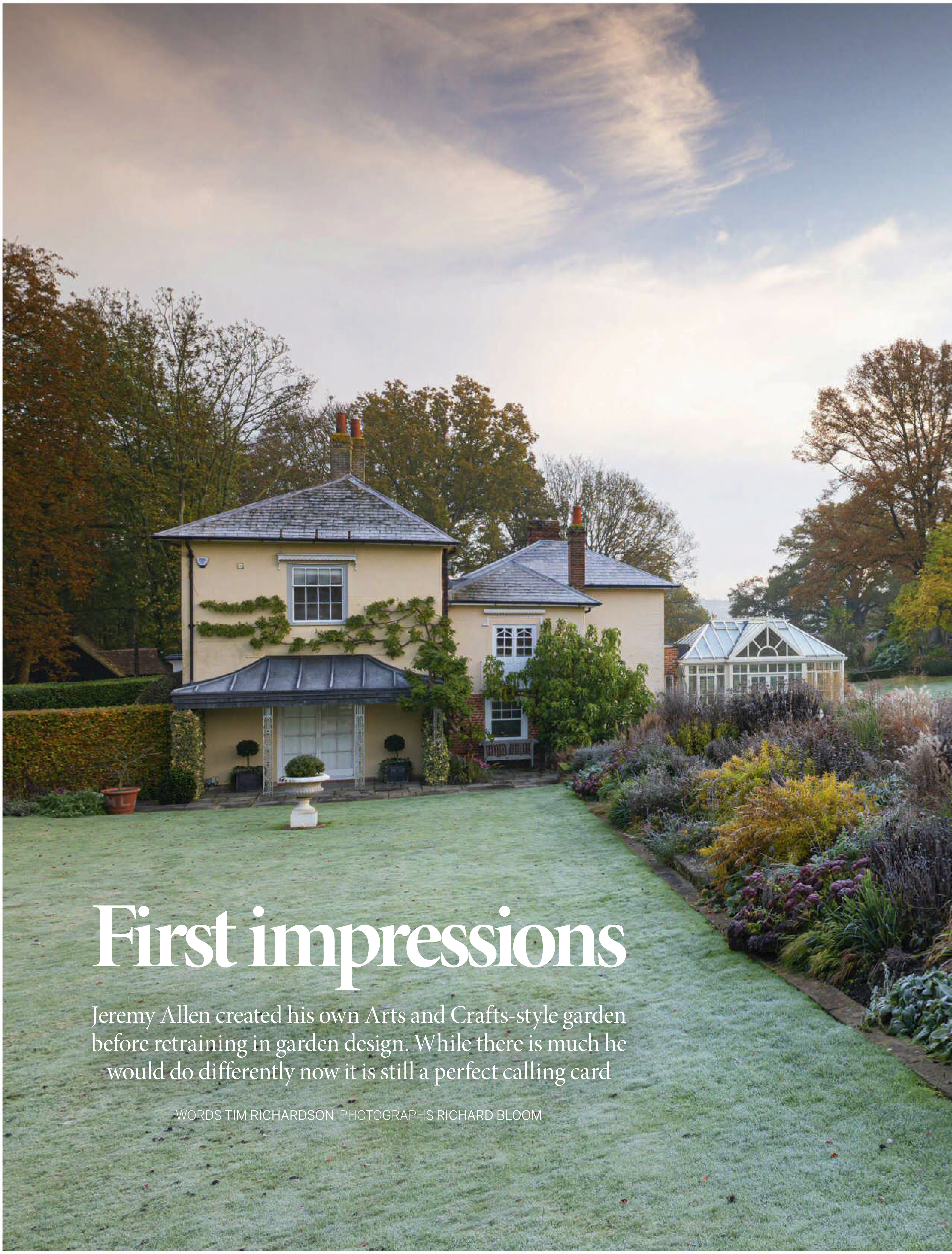
Erik has used as much space for planting as possible even turning one side into a densely planted green wall to this rusted palette. "I even like the orange spots of rust on the hollyhock leaves," says Erik. It's a plant he often uses as an effective foliage plant explaining that he "really doesn't want it to feel too perfect". While he is drawn to clean, contemporary design he feels this should be offset by informal and diverse plantings. "The plants should feel natural," he says.

For a small garden there are a remarkable number of different plants and Erik has used as much space for planting as possible, even turning one side into a densely planted green wall. Having experimented – with mixed results – on green walls in previous projects he was keen to ensure full coverage with strong, drought-resistant plants such as *Festuca glauca* and the creeping *Geranium macrorrhizum*. This green wall is planted above a small rill that flows along the arm of a garden seat into a narrow pool. Erik is adamant of the importance of water to bring movement and life into even the smallest garden. Water plants, such as *Pistia stratiotes*, and miniature water lilies provide cover for water snails and other insects while the sound of water, combined with the rustling of bamboo, deepens the tranquillity of this thoroughly modern city garden. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION
Find out more about Erik's work at **erikfunneman.nl**

Below Stylish butterfly chairs create a comfortable seating area where the owners can enjoy the sound of the water feature. Chosen by Erik, they reflect his interest in the fine details of the design. Behind them the textured green wall expands the planting area and helps bring more life into this small garden.





First impressions

Jeremy Allen created his own Arts and Crafts-style garden before retraining in garden design. While there is much he would do differently now it is still a perfect calling card

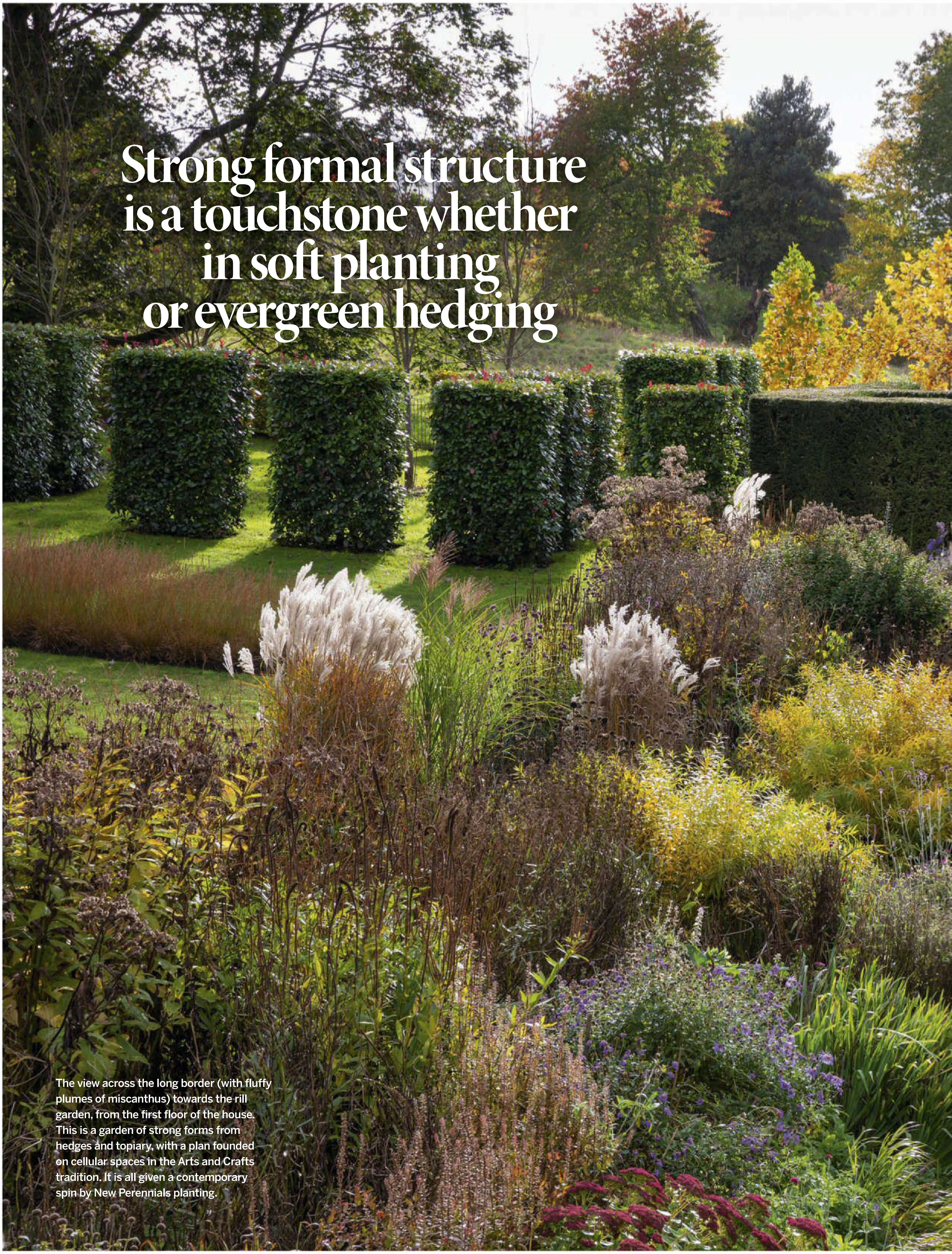
WORDS **TIM RICHARDSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **RICHARD BLOOM**

IN BRIEF

What Contemporary Arts and Crafts garden designed by Jeremy Allen.
Where Essex-Suffolk border.
Size Three and a half acres.
Soil Heavy clay.
Climate Temperate, with lower than average rainfall.
Hardiness zone USDA 8.

The long border is focused on the south side of the house, a Georgian rectory. The planting is influenced by Dutch designer Piet Oudolf, with grasses providing structure in the autumn along with colour notes from sedums and salvias. A fringe of woodland encloses the garden.

Strong formal structure is a touchstone whether in soft planting or evergreen hedging



The view across the long border (with fluffy plumes of miscanthus) towards the rill garden, from the first floor of the house. This is a garden of strong forms from hedges and topiary, with a plan founded on cellular spaces in the Arts and Crafts tradition. It is all given a contemporary spin by New Perennials planting.

Many a garden designer has used their own home garden as a way of showing off their style. Think Tom Stuart-Smith's Hertfordshire homestead, Arne Maynard's Monmouthshire demesne, or Arabella Lennox-Boyd's Lancashire mansion. What is disarming about career-change garden designer Jeremy Allen is that he notes that the garden he has created around his own home, a substantial late-Georgian rectory in the village of Wormingford on the Essex-Suffolk border, is full of decisions he would like to make again.

Jeremy embarked on the design of his own plot before he had any notion that he might wind up as a professional designer. Having worked in the financial sector for several decades, he suddenly decided he had had enough. "I was fed up with working in the City and looking to do something else," he explains. "I had embarked on the garden and found I really enjoyed it. So I figured, I've done one thing for 20 years – now I can do something else." Graduating from the Inchbald School of Design in 2008, Jeremy went on to establish what is now a flourishing practice centred in his part of eastern England.

Despite tentative beginnings, there is no doubt that the resultant garden, of three and a half acres, is an impressive piece of work. The interesting topography of the site, and the mature trees that fringe it, have proven to be a great blessing, as Jeremy readily acknowledges. "It's a classic dell garden – I've done very little soil shifting," he explains.

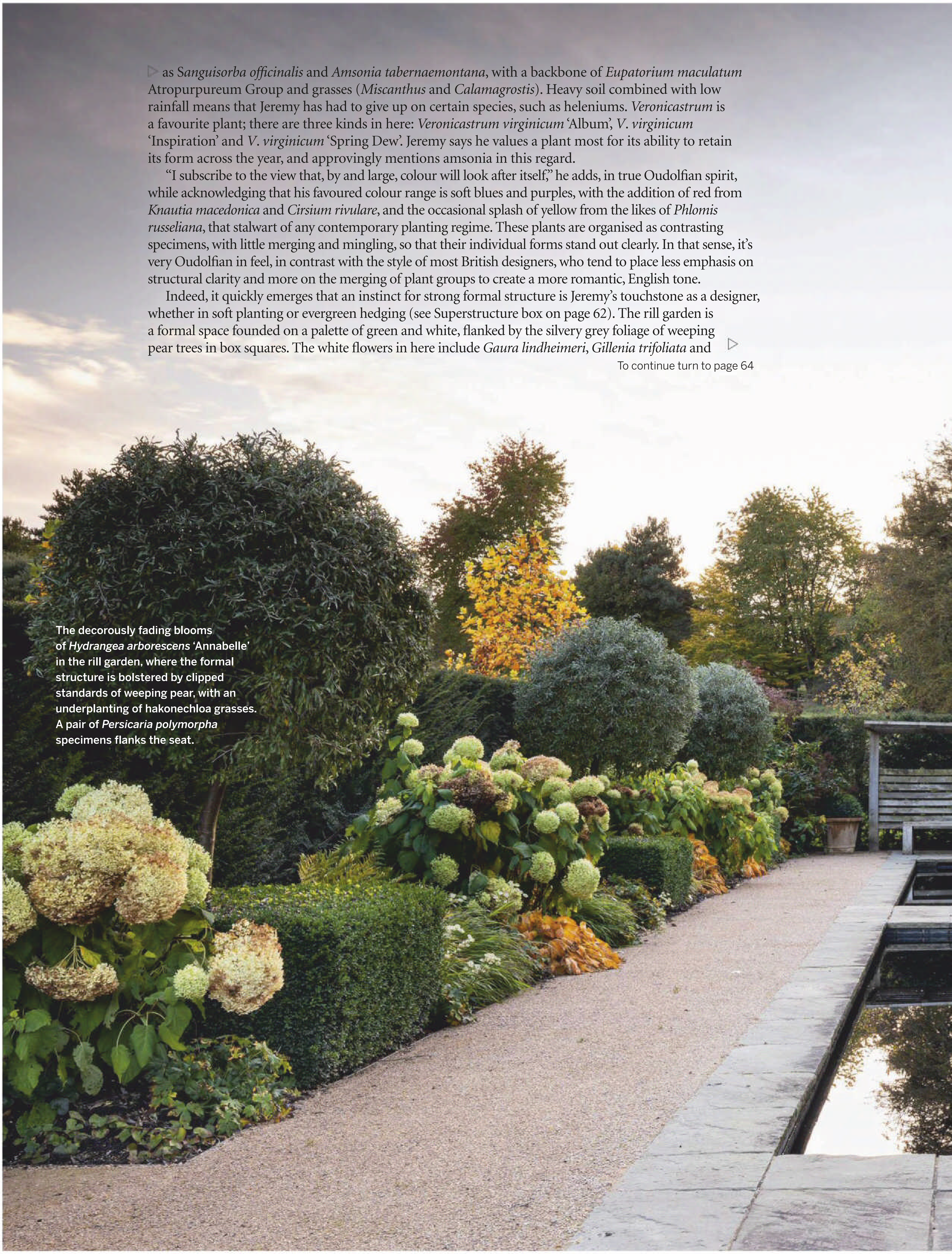
Jeremy cites Piet Oudolf as his major influence, and the kind of perennial planting style associated with the Dutch maestro is evident throughout the garden – notably in the long border, which shoots away from the south side of the house. This contains familiar subjects from the New Perennials lexicon, such ▷

▷ as *Sanguisorba officinalis* and *Amsonia tabernaemontana*, with a backbone of *Eupatorium maculatum* Atropurpureum Group and grasses (*Miscanthus* and *Calamagrostis*). Heavy soil combined with low rainfall means that Jeremy has had to give up on certain species, such as heleniums. *Veronicastrum* is a favourite plant; there are three kinds in here: *Veronicastrum virginicum* 'Album', *V. virginicum* 'Inspiration' and *V. virginicum* 'Spring Dew'. Jeremy says he values a plant most for its ability to retain its form across the year, and approvingly mentions amsonia in this regard.

"I subscribe to the view that, by and large, colour will look after itself," he adds, in true Oudolfian spirit, while acknowledging that his favoured colour range is soft blues and purples, with the addition of red from *Knautia macedonica* and *Cirsium rivulare*, and the occasional splash of yellow from the likes of *Phlomis russeliana*, that stalwart of any contemporary planting regime. These plants are organised as contrasting specimens, with little merging and mingling, so that their individual forms stand out clearly. In that sense, it's very Oudolfian in feel, in contrast with the style of most British designers, who tend to place less emphasis on structural clarity and more on the merging of plant groups to create a more romantic, English tone.

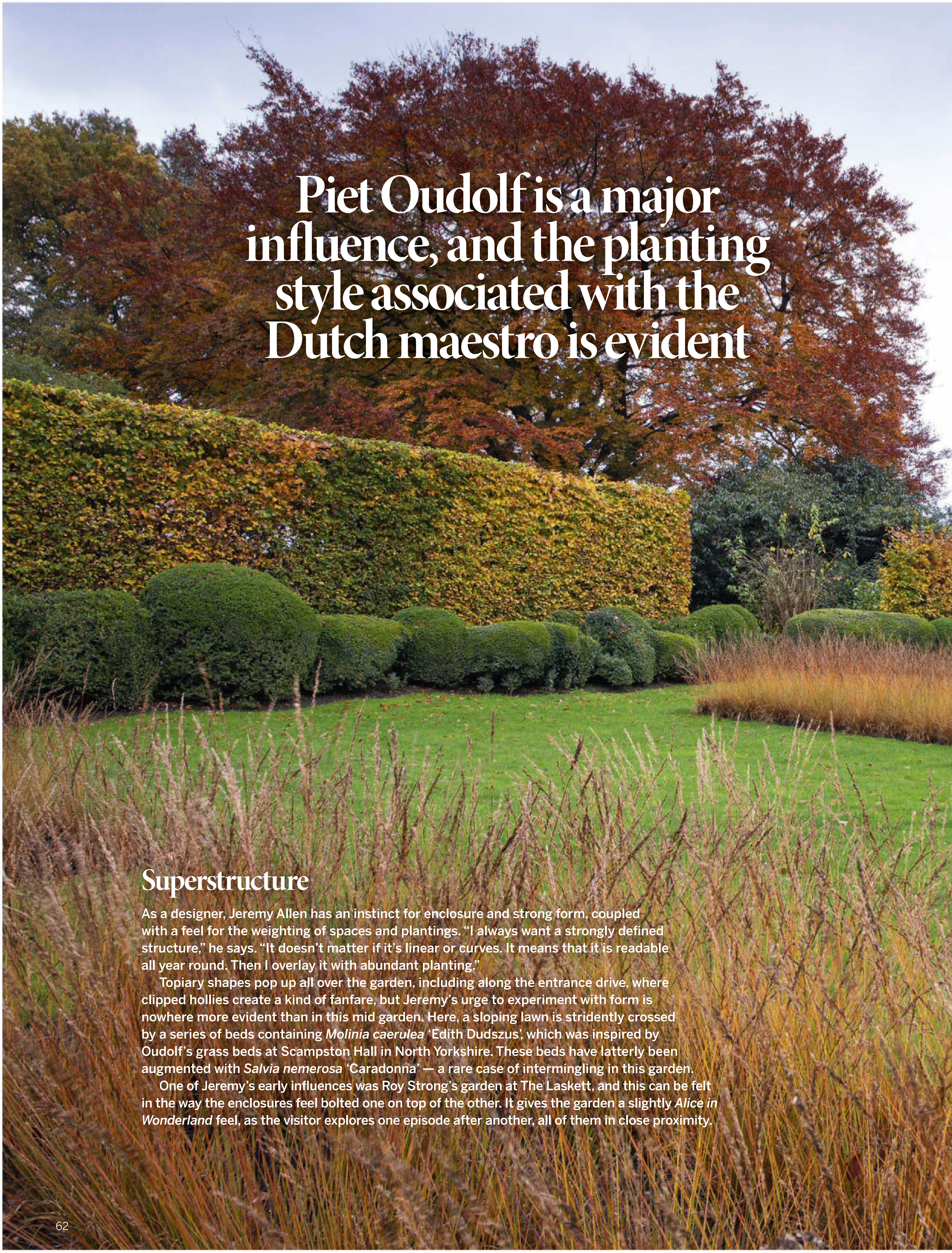
Indeed, it quickly emerges that an instinct for strong formal structure is Jeremy's touchstone as a designer, whether in soft planting or evergreen hedging (see Superstructure box on page 62). The rill garden is a formal space founded on a palette of green and white, flanked by the silvery grey foliage of weeping pear trees in box squares. The white flowers in here include *Gaura lindheimeri*, *Gillenia trifoliata* and ▷

To continue turn to page 64



The decorously fading blooms of *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' in the rill garden, where the formal structure is bolstered by clipped standards of weeping pear, with an underplanting of hakonechloa grasses. A pair of *Persicaria polymorpha* specimens flanks the seat.

The rill garden is a formal space founded on a palette of green and white



Piet Oudolf is a major influence, and the planting style associated with the Dutch maestro is evident

Superstructure

As a designer, Jeremy Allen has an instinct for enclosure and strong form, coupled with a feel for the weighting of spaces and plantings. “I always want a strongly defined structure,” he says. “It doesn’t matter if it’s linear or curves. It means that it is readable all year round. Then I overlay it with abundant planting.”

Topiary shapes pop up all over the garden, including along the entrance drive, where clipped hollies create a kind of fanfare, but Jeremy’s urge to experiment with form is nowhere more evident than in this mid garden. Here, a sloping lawn is stridently crossed by a series of beds containing *Molinia caerulea* ‘Edith Dudszus’, which was inspired by Oudolf’s grass beds at Scampston Hall in North Yorkshire. These beds have latterly been augmented with *Salvia nemerosa* ‘Caradonna’ — a rare case of intermingling in this garden.

One of Jeremy’s early influences was Roy Strong’s garden at The Laskett, and this can be felt in the way the enclosures feel bolted one on top of the other. It gives the garden a slightly *Alice in Wonderland* feel, as the visitor explores one episode after another, all of them in close proximity.

The upper slopes of the garden are home to a semi-open space that feels like a shrubbery cum meadow

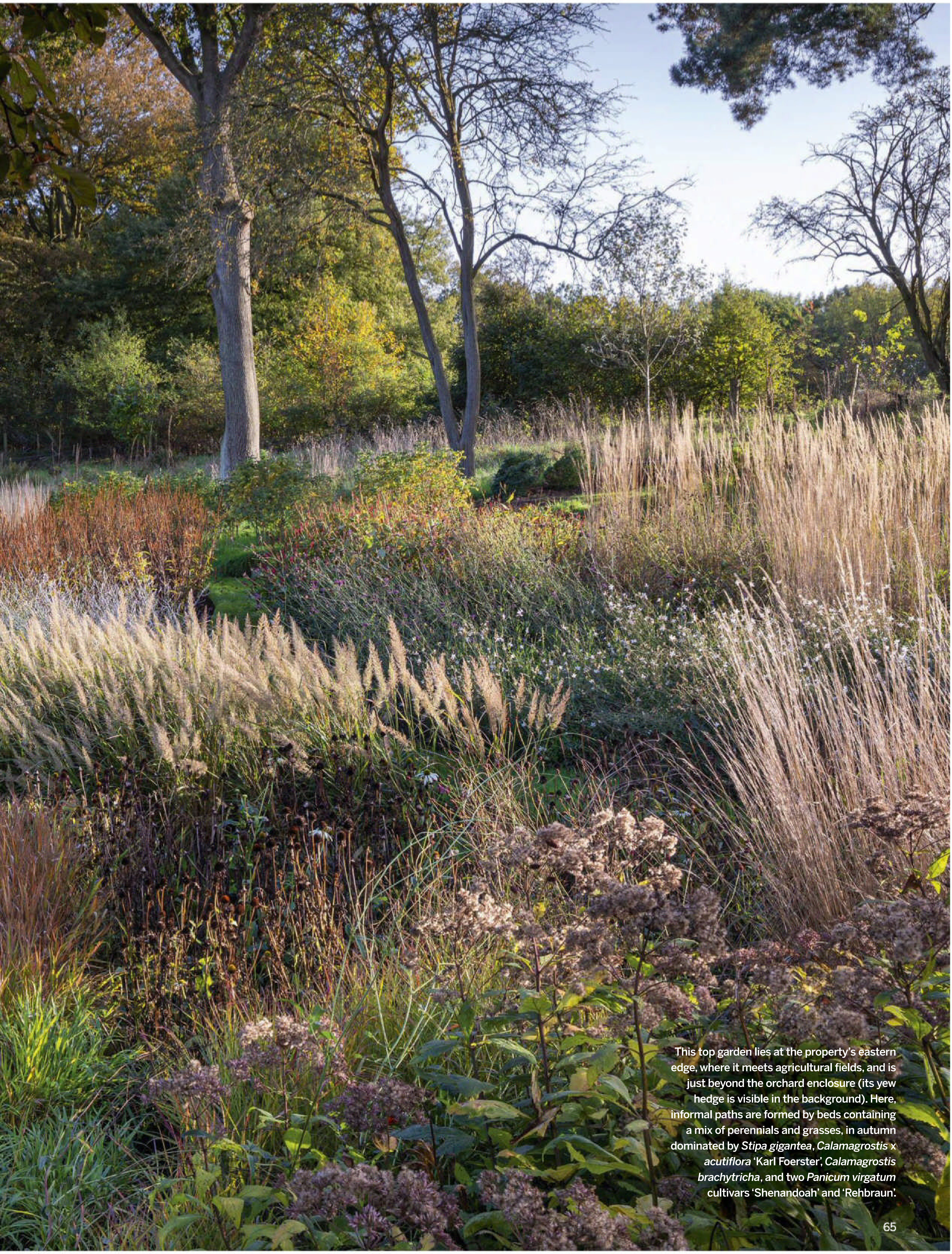
▷ *Astrantia maxima*, while the stand-out plant, the hydrangea, just had to be the effervescent *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle'. Other formal enclosures in this garden of cellular spaces include an orchard on the upward slope east of the house and a small formal pool garden, which is a work in progress.

Outside the hedged enclosures are several informal areas with larger perennials and a few (but not too many) shrubs and small trees. A shrubbery garden on the west side has proven unexpectedly enjoyable for Jeremy (he favours *Skimmia*, *Hydrangea* and *Pittosporum*), while a bog garden runs alongside an existing stream to the east, with thalictrums, acorus, hostas and irises. The upper slopes of the garden are home to a semi-open space that feels like a shrubbery cum meadow, with plenty of persicarias, salvias, eupatoriums, veronicastrums and grasses, as well as small stands of birch and acer. This area betrays the Oudolf influence almost as much as the long border, being reminiscent of his work at Trentham in Staffordshire.

Over on the far side of the orchard is another surprise: a narrow sliver of woodland garden. The acers in here were inspired by Beth Chatto's garden, and there are thousands of snowdrops and other bulbs in spring. It's yet more evidence that in this garden, there is always going to be something else around the corner. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Jeremy's work at **jeremyallengardendesign.co.uk**



This top garden lies at the property's eastern edge, where it meets agricultural fields, and is just beyond the orchard enclosure (its yew hedge is visible in the background). Here, informal paths are formed by beds containing a mix of perennials and grasses, in autumn dominated by *Stipa gigantea*, *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', *Calamagrostis brachytricha*, and two *Panicum virgatum* cultivars 'Shenandoah' and 'Rehbraun'.

HORTICULTURAL WHO'S WHO

JON STOKES

The director of trees, science and research at the Tree Council on a life spent among trees and nature, the importance of the Council's tree warden scheme and why we all need trees in our lives

WORDS CHRISTOPHER STOCKS PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

A pandemic first ignited Jon Stokes' love of trees. During the late 1960s, a devastating outbreak of Dutch elm disease killed millions of trees across the UK, and as part of its response, the government launched a countrywide scheme snappily entitled 'Plant a Tree in '73'. Jon's father got involved, organising 50 trees to be planted for the 50 houses in their street. Jon was seven at the time, and already deeply absorbed in natural history, but as he says, "That was what really opened my eyes to trees."

He grew up on a big, new housing estate at Portchester near Portsmouth, on the side of Portsdown Hill, where he still lives today. "My parents' house came with half an acre of chalk downland that had simply been fenced in to make the garden," says Jon. "I managed to persuade them to keep it that way, and for the past 50 years they've only mown the grass two times a year – it's full of wildflowers and orchids." His early passion for natural history led him on to a degree in botany and zoology, followed by an MA in conservation; he wrote his masters thesis on the blue-butterfly colonies in his parents' garden. Despite their support for his interests Jon's parents were less than overjoyed by their son's eventual career choice. "If anything my parents tried to talk me out of going into conservation," he says. "They couldn't see how I could make a living from it. It's still a challenge for young people today: there isn't an obvious career path to follow."

A research project at University College London that was investigating how charities managed the woodlands under their care led Jon to a job at an environmental charity, and a project supporting an initiative that encouraged local people to become 'tree wardens', which had been launched in the early 1980s in Leicestershire and East Sussex. The scheme's aim was to create a network of volunteers who could, among other things, keep an eye on the wellbeing of local trees and encourage increased tree planting in their area. When that charity was wound up in 1989, Jon joined the Tree Council, keeping in mind the idea of the tree wardens and launching the scheme nationally the following year.

Today, in the 30th anniversary of the scheme, there are around 6,000 volunteers around the country. "I'm humbled by the fact that I've been part of this journey with so many inspirational volunteer tree wardens over the course of the years," says Jon. "Their skills, knowledge, enthusiasm and passion surpasses anything I could have dreamed of. They have planted, protected and celebrated millions of trees. And I started that."

After three decades in the job, latterly as the Tree Council's director of trees, science and research, Jon's enthusiasm remains undimmed – but then as he says: "The past 30 years have been fun, but the next 30 years offer huge challenges, and I've never felt more passionate to make a difference, because so much is at stake. We need to have wholesale societal rethink about how we use energy and reduce our carbon output. Trees can play an important part in helping to absorb some of our carbon output, but this is more than just planting trees. Trees will grow naturally if we let them – so it's about the way we manage the countryside and giving trees the opportunity to grow."

With climate change and globalisation enabling the rapid spread of new diseases, this is a worrying time for arboriculturists, and Jon cautions anyone who's planning to plant new trees to think carefully before they start. "We have to be especially careful about what we plant and particularly where it has come from," he says. "Moving plants and their associated diseases around the world is simply not sensible. Ideally, grow trees from seed you have collected locally – it is after all what seeds are for. Grow them in pots and plant them out when they are old enough to cope. If you buy trees, check that the nursery you use has grown them in the UK and that they have never been abroad. It's not difficult – but it is vital."

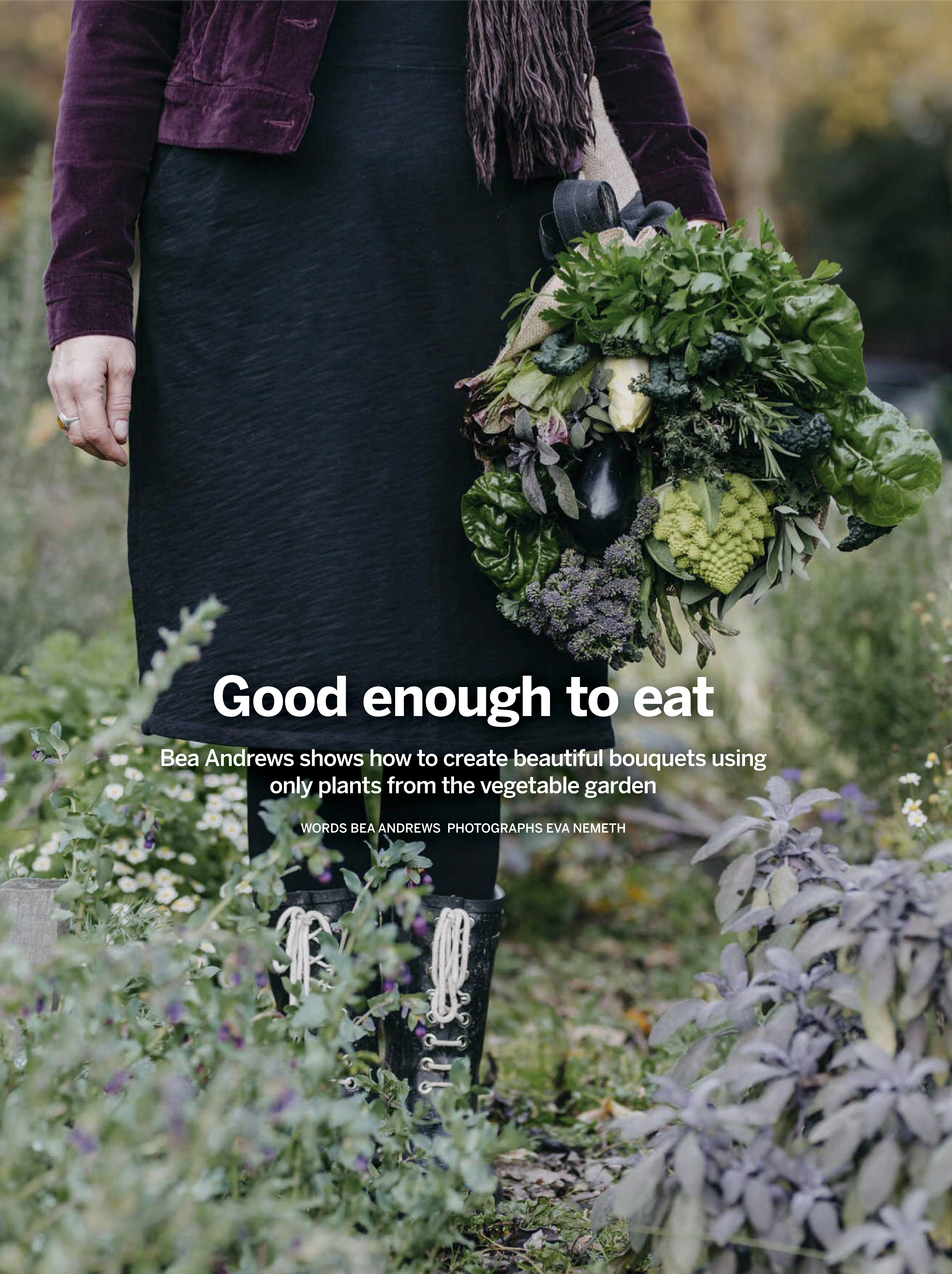
> A WORLD WITHOUT TREES WOULD BE A WORLD WITHOUT CHOCOLATE. AND THAT'S NOT A WORLD I WANT TO LIVE IN

Big challenges require a big-picture response, but Jon has never lost his love of particular trees. "I think of them as individuals, each with its own character and life history," he says. "I guess that's why I love free-standing trees more than woods." He's also particularly proud of having found one of the oldest trees in Europe, the Llangernyw Yew in Conwy, North Wales. "On my first visit it had an oil tank in the middle of it," Jon recalls, "but we managed to get that removed, and today it's looking fantastic; it's probably my favourite tree."

For Jon, trees touch everything we do. "Trees produce so many things we use and eat daily, without thinking that they come from trees," he points out. "A world without trees would be a world without chocolate. And that's not a world I want to live in." □

USEFUL INFORMATION

National Tree Week, organised by the Tree Council, runs from 28 November to 6 December. treecouncil.org.uk



Good enough to eat

Bea Andrews shows how to create beautiful bouquets using only plants from the vegetable garden

WORDS BEA ANDREWS PHOTOGRAPHS EVA NEMETH

For this edible bouquet Bea used chard, black Tuscan kale (cavolo nero), green curly kale, small red cos lettuce, Witloof chicory (Belgian endive), flat leaf parsley, rosemary, thyme, green and purple sage, lime-green Romanesco cauliflower, purple sprouting broccoli stems and aubergine.

I have always been fascinated by beautiful ornamental vegetables, especially ones maturing in the autumn. Their colours are deep and glossy with earthy tones and lush textures, they look painterly arranged in a basket and make fantastic gifts for foodie friends and family. They are even more attractive when arranged as an edible bouquet.

Members of the brassica group offer a great selection of vegetables in the autumn in all shapes and colours with good strong leaves and stems. Different varieties of kale, small vibrant cauliflowers and later in the season sprouting broccoli or Brussels florets still on their stems make for a striking ingredient in an edible bouquet.

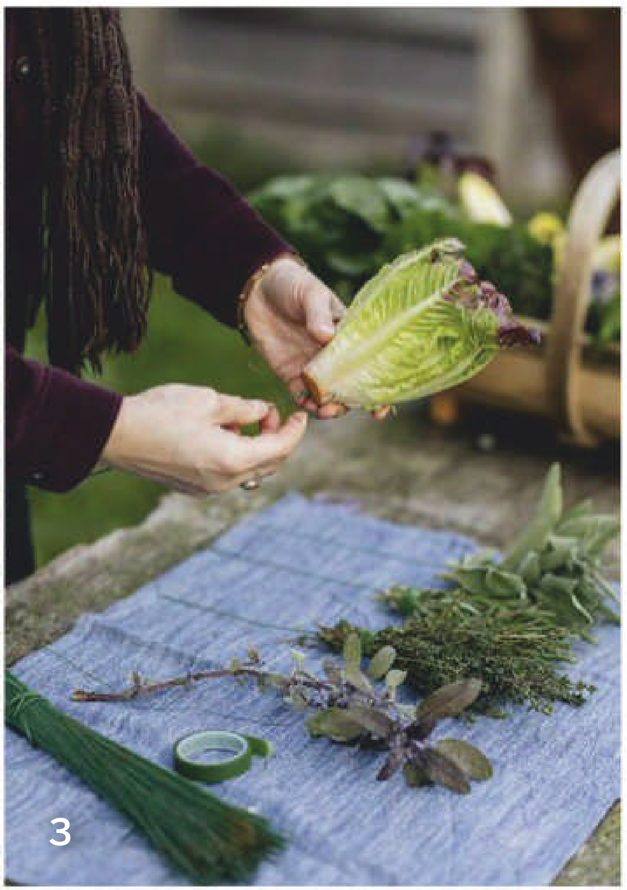
Herbs with long stems and woody branches add aroma and texture with lovely shades of silver, deep green to purple. Shrubby, evergreen herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, sage and winter savory, are the best seasonal choices as they have strong stems and long-lasting foliage. Leafy herbs with softer textures such as coriander would generally wilt quickly in a bouquet. Garden grown parsley, however, has more robust stems and leaves, and if well hydrated before arranging they can be great additions.

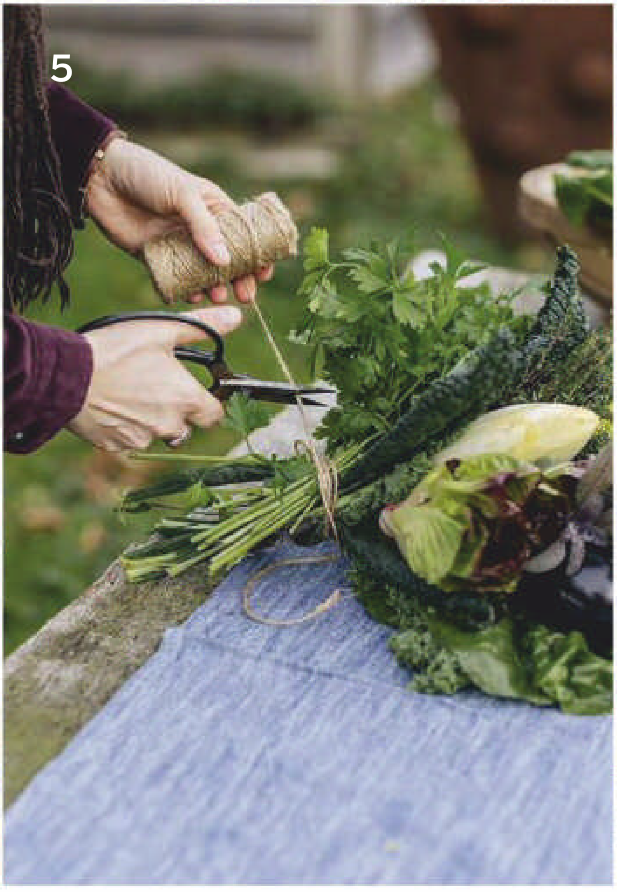
While edible flowers are less abundant in autumn and winter, many beautiful violas are grown in the colder months and can be used in a bouquet, choose those with longer stems, or lengthen a small bundle of short-stemmed flowers with florist wire and stem tape.

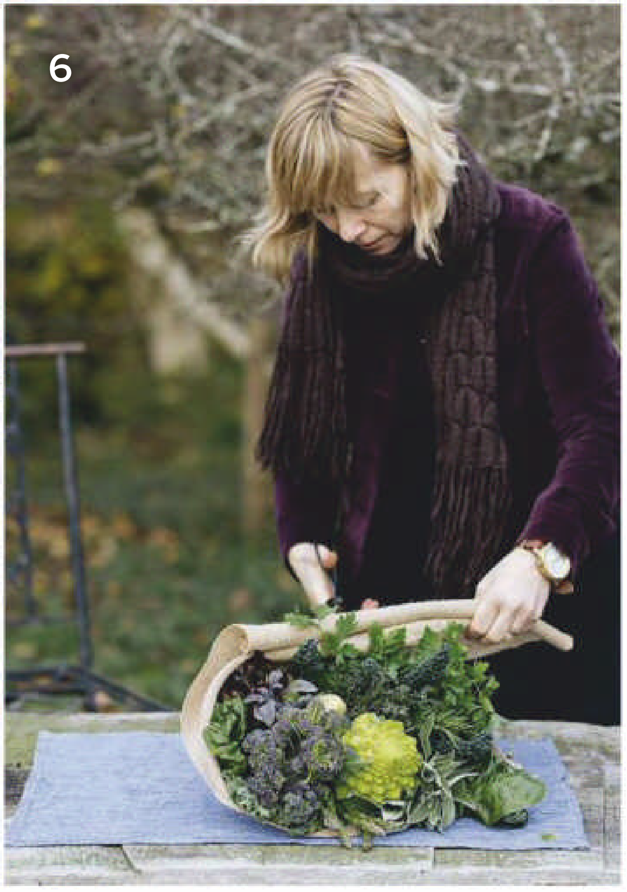
Root vegetables, such as carrots and beetroots, are best used upside down, using their leafy tops as the stem, showing off the attractive earthy colours of their roots. Use onions and garlic the same way, they work especially well when they still have a length of stem attached.

Leafy vegetables, with adequately sturdy leaves for arranging, such as cos lettuces, chard, chicory and endive, have a huge range of leaf colouring and variegation, especially if you grow your own from seed. Some produce with large fruits, such as aubergines, chillies and peppers, are easy to secure with wire or a wooden skewer to help fit into a bouquet. Try to avoid using softer fruits that bruise easily. □

Turn the page for how to create your own edible bouquet







How to create your own edible bouquet

1 Choose your crops Leafy vegetables and herbs need to be well hydrated before arranging, so pick the day before and stand the stems in a jug of water for an hour or overnight before you arrange your bouquet.

2 Make mini bunches Creating a few smaller bunches of individual vegetables and herbs will make it easier to assemble the bouquet later. Tape together these mini bunches with florist tape to avoid bruising the stems.

3 Additional support Vegetables without a stem to hold will need support, either by securing florist wire or inserting a long wooden skewer into their sturdy base about 3cm deep. I added these to my aubergine, cauliflower, lettuce and endive.

4 Forming the bouquet Once you are ready to bunch your vegetables together, then treat the leafy stems as foliage background for the bouquet and the larger heads of fruits and vegetables as focal points to place in a few well-placed spots in the bouquet. It is best to place the larger produce in the middle where they are well supported by the rest of the ingredients.

5 Securing the bouquet While adding your vegetables, be sure to turn your bouquet every so often to check it has a good balance on all sides. Tie it with twine when finished. Keep it somewhere cool in fresh water or hydrate the leaves with a mister until you are ready to gift it.

6 Final touch For a complementing rustic finish, use a hessian sheet for wrapping your bouquet and tie it with a toning hessian ribbon.

- **Extending the mix** The choices of colour combinations for edible bouquets are endless, and you can easily boost your vegetable selection by adding a few ingredients to your gift bouquet from a farm shop, farmers' market or supermarket. Aim to keep your choices as seasonal as possible for maximum appeal and choice.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Bea Andrews is the founder of Botanika, a floral design studio in West Sussex, find out more at **botanikafloral.co.uk**

A new leaf

After 30 years perfecting her garden at Duck Hill, garden writer Page Dickey took on a new challenge with a vast garden in Connecticut

WORDS TANIA COMPTON PHOTOGRAPHS NGOC MINH NGO

IN BRIEF

What A private garden surrounded by meadows and woodland.
Where Connecticut, USA.
Soil Calcareous (the garden is on limestone ledge rock). Quick-draining near house; deep rich soil in low woods and fen.
Size 17 acres.
Climate Hot summers and cold winters, usually with a good deal of snow.
Hardiness zone USDA 5b.

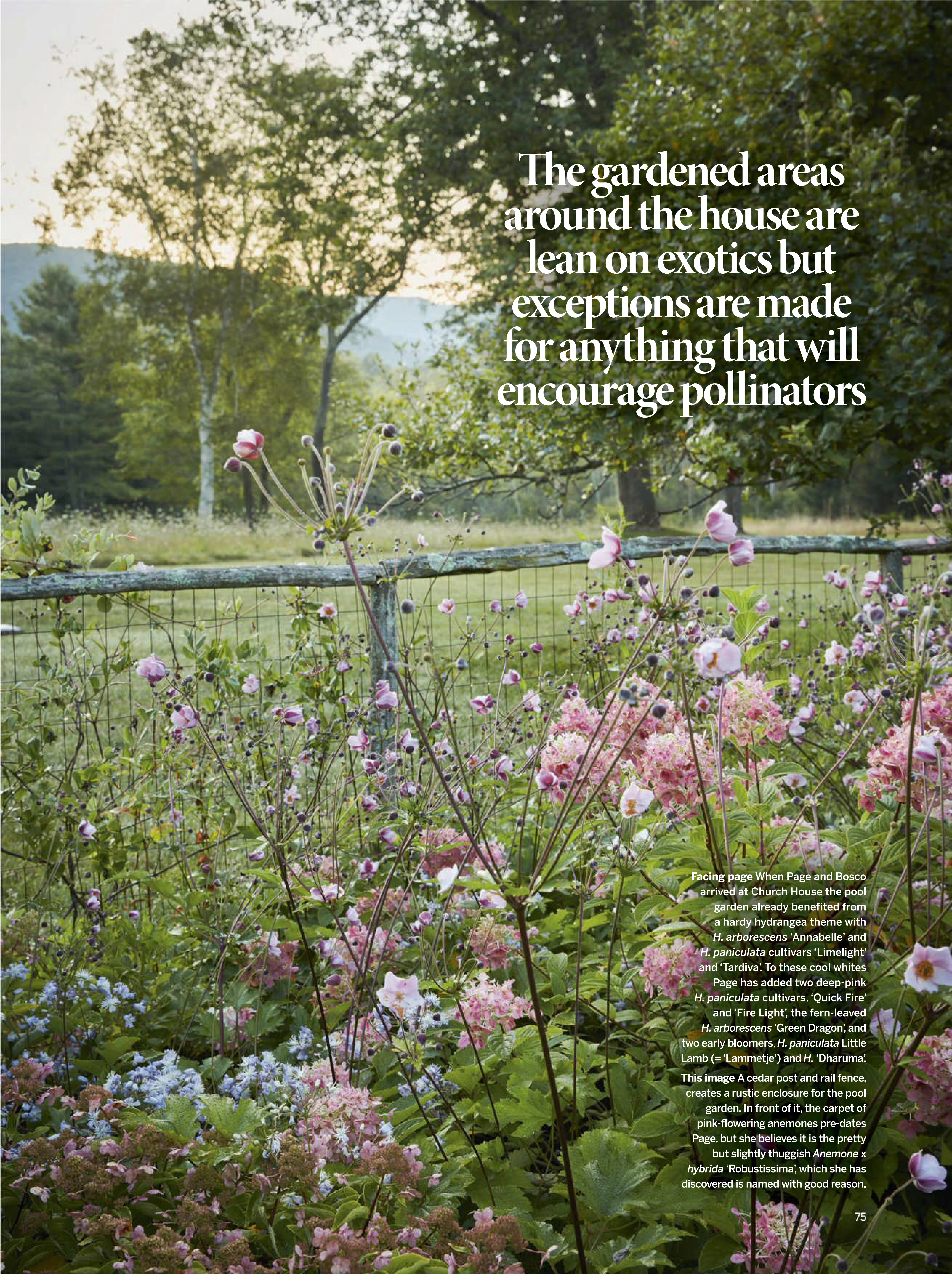
Facing page Page Dickey's new home, Church House in Connecticut, was built in the 18th century as a Methodist church. Towering above it is huge *Acer saccharum*, a "great and glorious sugar maple with furrowed bark streaked with black green moss" that is within touching distance of Page's third-floor study window.

This image Moss-encrusted limestone boulders in one of Church House's meadows marks a transition to the solid rock of the high woods behind.

A land of lavender and burnt sienna sunsets beckoned Page Dickey and Bosco Schell to New England when they realised their much-fêted garden at Duck Hill in New York had become a Herculean challenge. The intention was "to buy tomatoes now, not grow them" so the move to 17 acres and a drop in climate zone to build bridges across a wetland fen in Litchfield County, Connecticut took their friends by surprise. But Church House, built in 1793 as the first Methodist church to be erected in New England, was something of a call of the wild for them both and the wetland fen is only one in a rich matrix of interlocking habitats they now inhabit. The limestone boulder-strewn woodland with a quarry, from which yard-long icicles drip in winter, melts to a weep-worthy carpet of native bulbs, ferns and grasses; there are gasp-inducing, perennial-rich, butterfly-enticing meadows and a heavenly garden open to the landscape but subtly fenced off from bears and deer.

One thing was clear, Page was done with enclosed gardens and her mantra never to "put flowers in front of a view" was jettisoned when she saw the shifts in light that roll over the soft Berkshire

The gardened areas around the house are lean on exotics but exceptions are made for anything that will encourage pollinators



Facing page When Page and Bosco arrived at Church House the pool garden already benefited from a hardy hydrangea theme with *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle' and *H. paniculata* cultivars 'Limelight' and 'Tardiva'. To these cool whites Page has added two deep-pink *H. paniculata* cultivars, 'Quick Fire' and 'Fire Light', the fern-leaved *H. arborescens* 'Green Dragon', and two early bloomers, *H. paniculata* Little Lamb (= 'Lammetje') and *H.* 'Dharuma'.

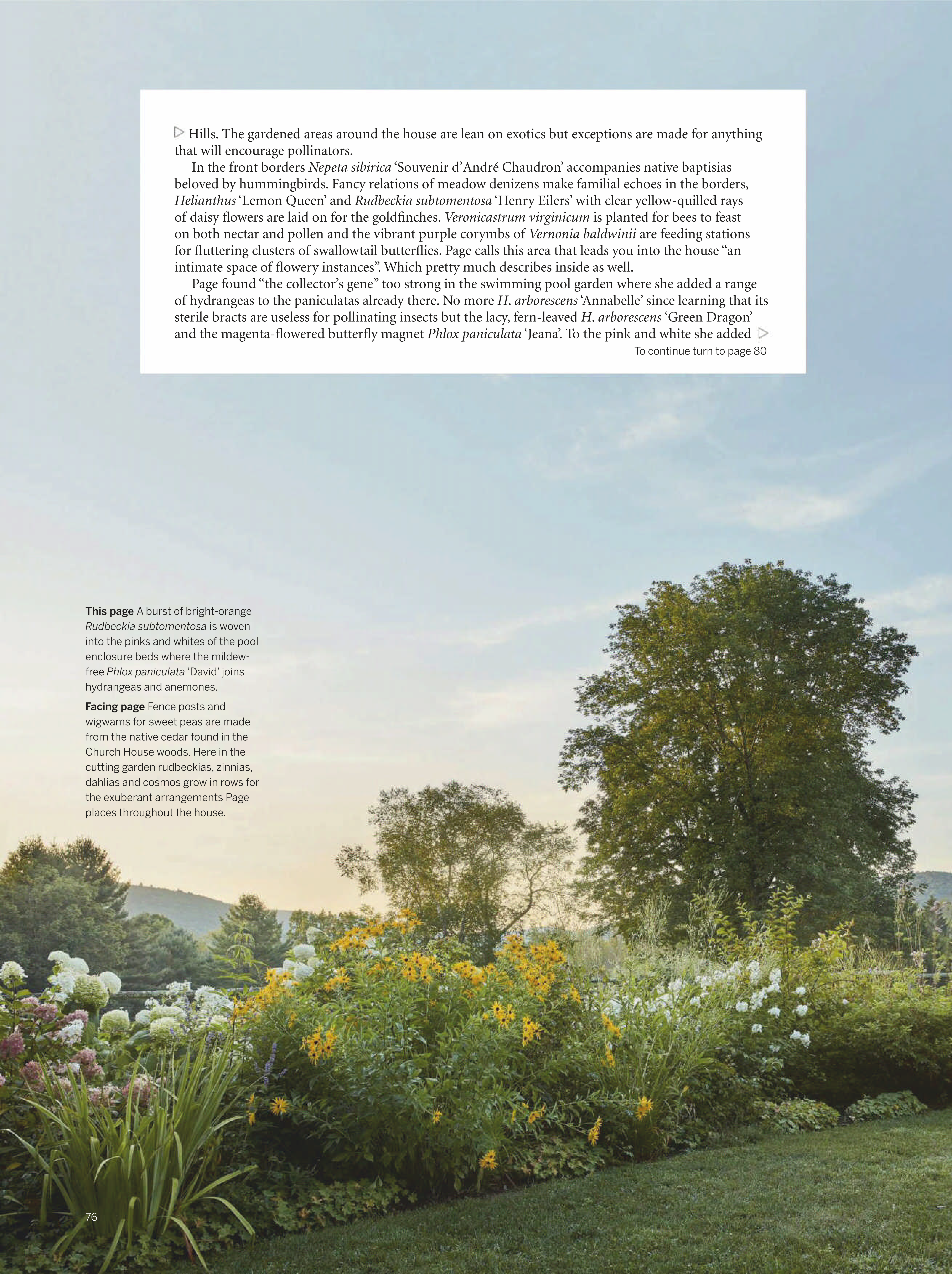
This image A cedar post and rail fence, creates a rustic enclosure for the pool garden. In front of it, the carpet of pink-flowering anemones pre-dates Page, but she believes it is the pretty but slightly thuggish *Anemone* x *hybrida* 'Robustissima', which she has discovered is named with good reason.

▷ Hills. The gardened areas around the house are lean on exotics but exceptions are made for anything that will encourage pollinators.

In the front borders *Nepeta sibirica* 'Souvenir d'André Chaudron' accompanies native baptisias beloved by hummingbirds. Fancy relations of meadow denizens make familial echoes in the borders, *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen' and *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* 'Henry Eilers' with clear yellow-quilled rays of daisy flowers are laid on for the goldfinches. *Veronicastrum virginicum* is planted for bees to feast on both nectar and pollen and the vibrant purple corymbs of *Vernonia baldwinii* are feeding stations for fluttering clusters of swallowtail butterflies. Page calls this area that leads you into the house "an intimate space of flowery instances". Which pretty much describes inside as well.

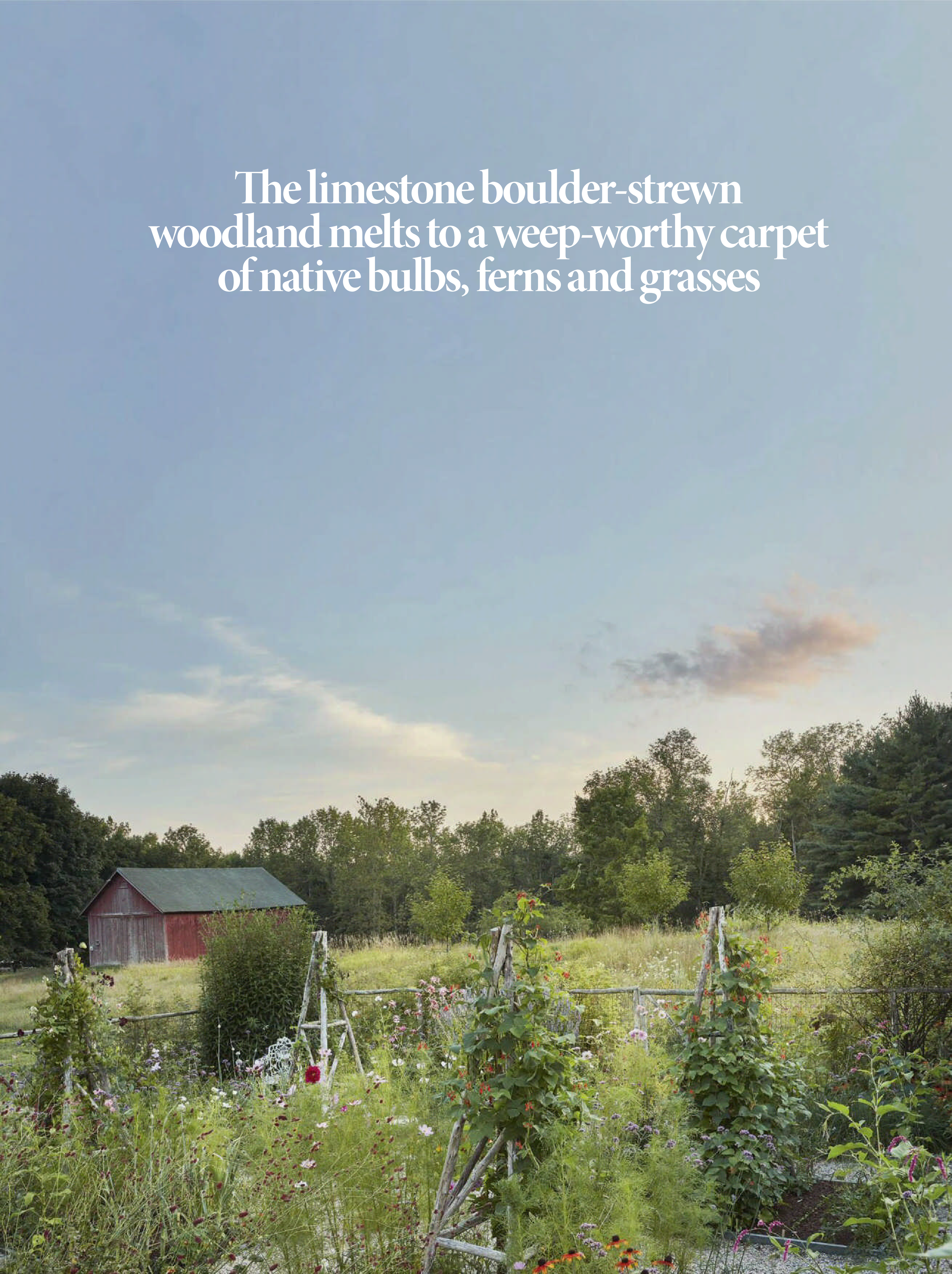
Page found "the collector's gene" too strong in the swimming pool garden where she added a range of hydrangeas to the paniculatas already there. No more *H. arborescens* 'Annabelle' since learning that its sterile bracts are useless for pollinating insects but the lacy, fern-leaved *H. arborescens* 'Green Dragon' and the magenta-flowered butterfly magnet *Phlox paniculata* 'Jeana'. To the pink and white she added ▷

To continue turn to page 80



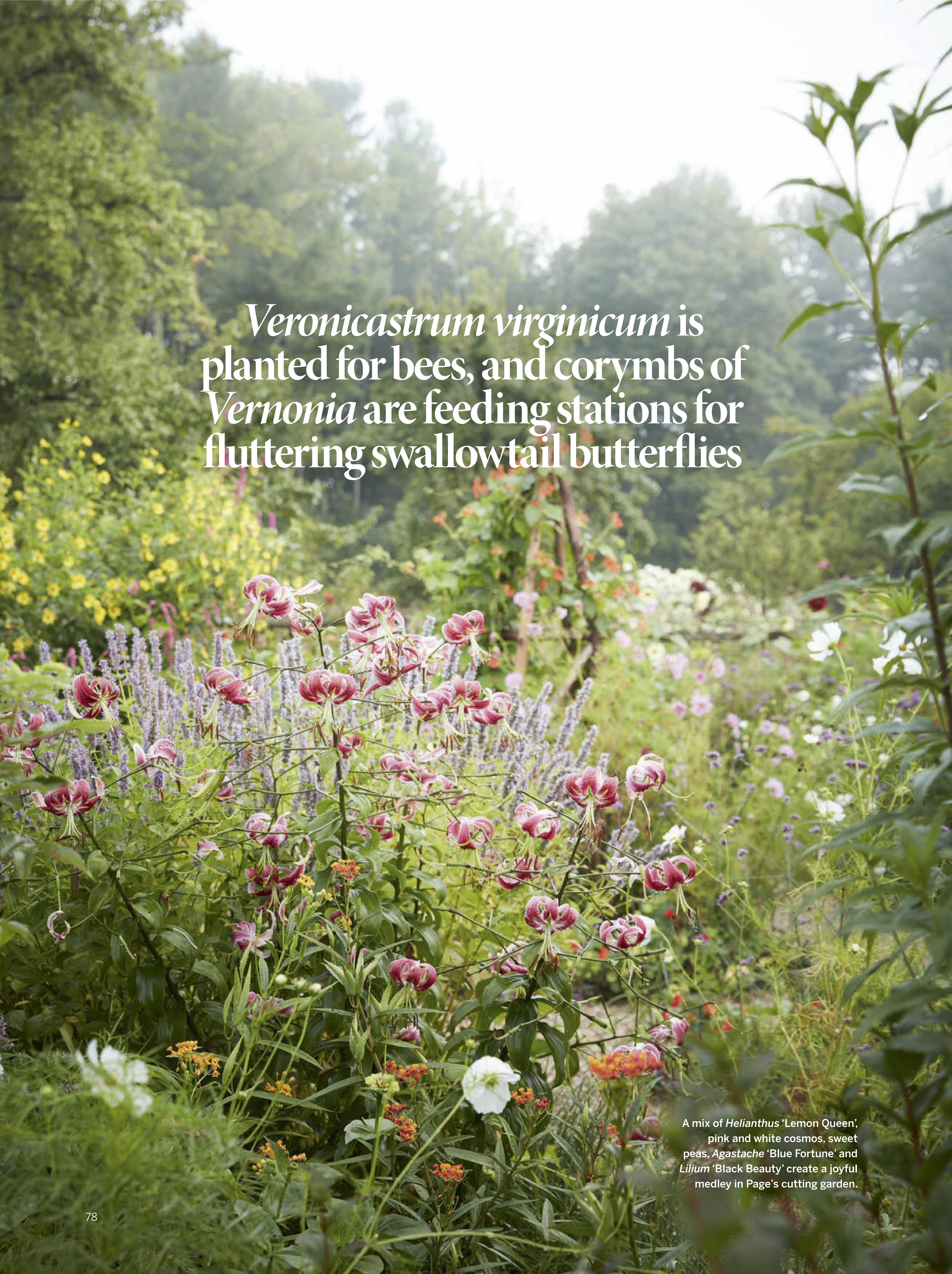
This page A burst of bright-orange *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* is woven into the pinks and whites of the pool enclosure beds where the mildew-free *Phlox paniculata* 'David' joins hydrangeas and anemones.

Facing page Fence posts and wigwams for sweet peas are made from the native cedar found in the Church House woods. Here in the cutting garden rudbeckias, zinnias, dahlias and cosmos grow in rows for the exuberant arrangements Page places throughout the house.

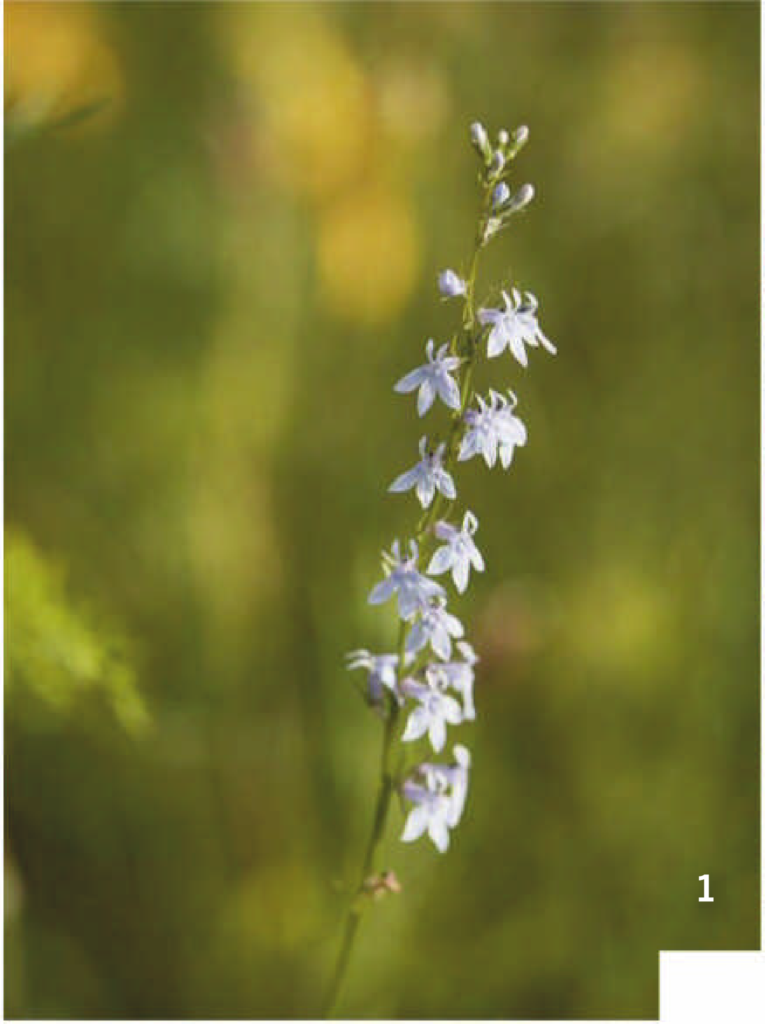


The limestone boulder-strewn woodland melts to a weep-worthy carpet of native bulbs, ferns and grasses

Veronicastrum virginicum is planted for bees, and corymbs of *Vernonia* are feeding stations for fluttering swallowtail butterflies



A mix of *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen', pink and white cosmos, sweet peas, *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune' and *Lilium* 'Black Beauty' create a joyful medley in Page's cutting garden.



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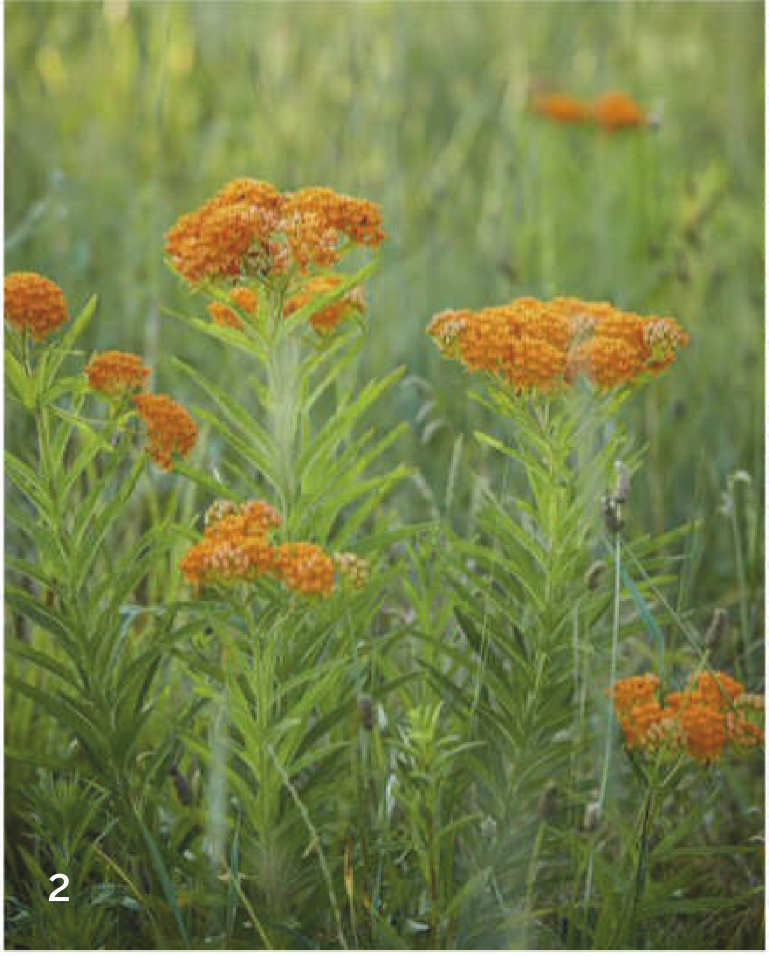

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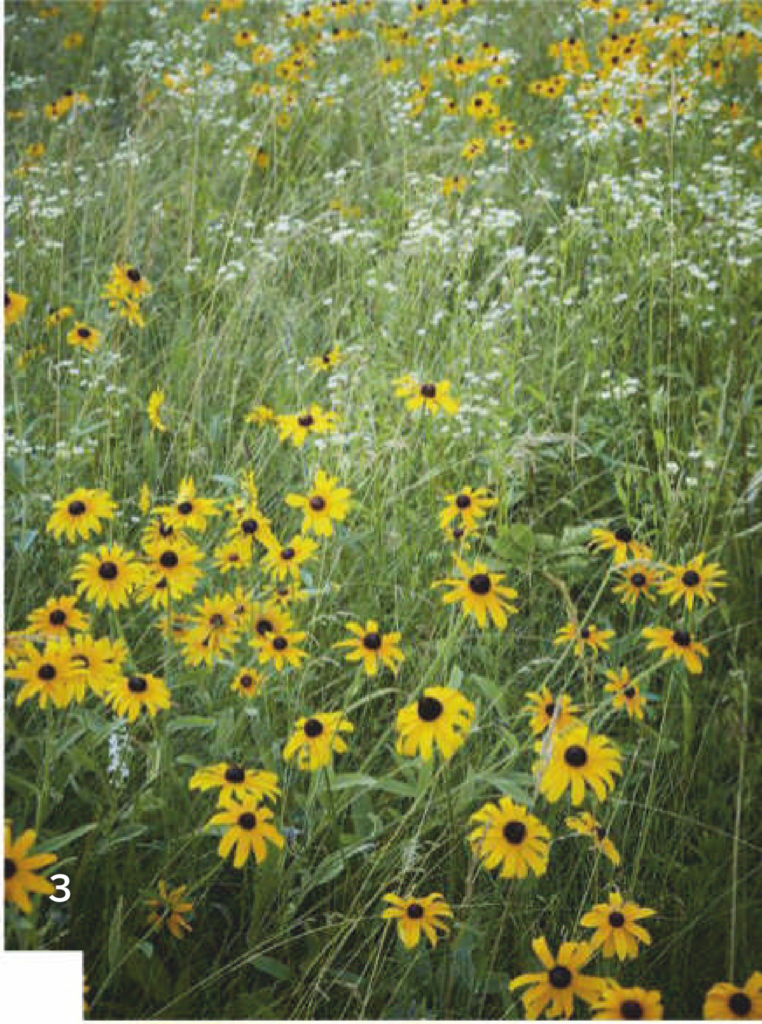

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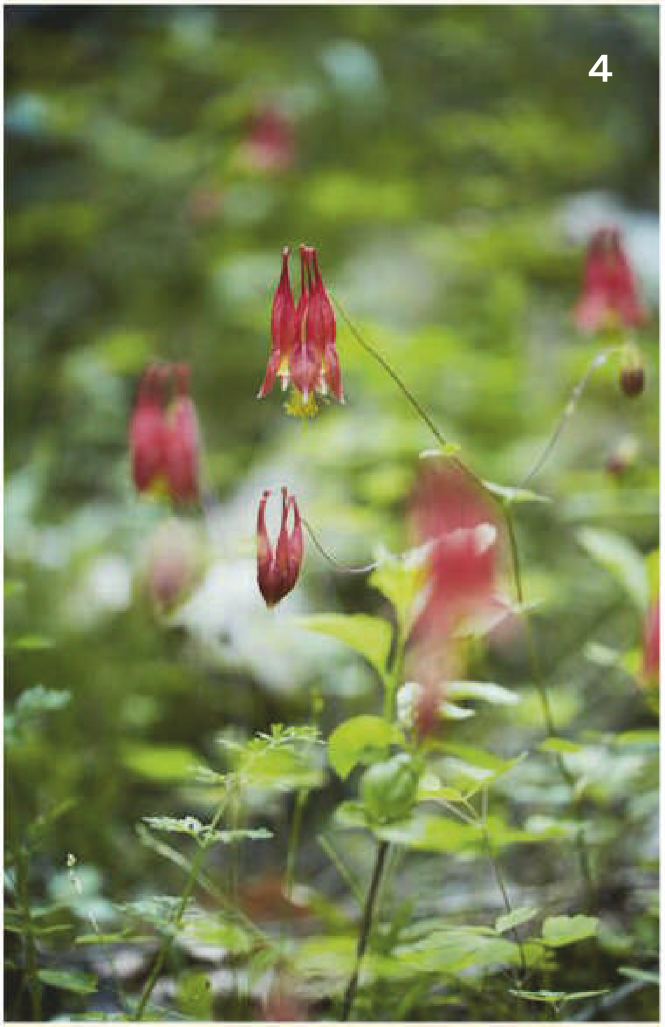

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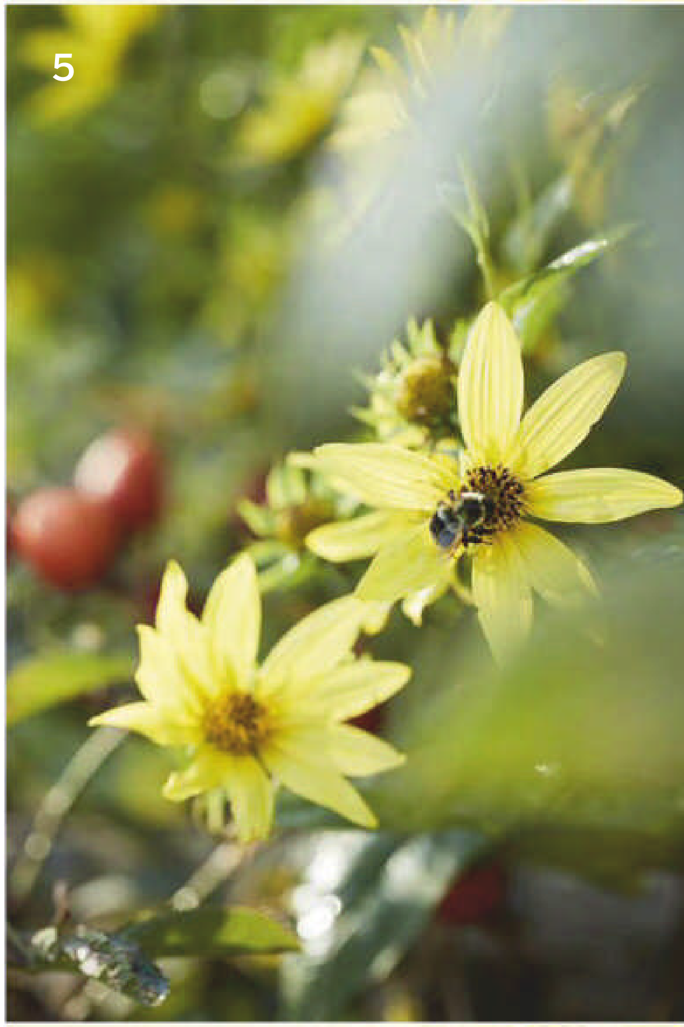

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8 KEY PLANTS

1 *Lobelia spicata* A beautiful and delicate native flower that looks especially lovely growing in Page's fields among rudbeckias in July. More delicate than its cousin *L. siphilitica*, which is also native to Connecticut, and more tolerant of dry conditions. Happy in full sun and half shade. 80-90cm. USDA 4a- 9b[†].

2 *Asclepias tuberosa* Another meadow native, which is particularly loved by monarch butterflies. It happily seeds and spreads in the poor soil and limestone of Page's back field where it is particularly dry. 90cm. RHS H4.

3 *Rudbeckia hirta* A native perennial that grows among fleabane in the dry soil of the back west field. Best in full sun. It is the preferred source of nectar of the endangered northern metalmark butterfly. 90cm. USDA 3a-7b.

4 *Aquilegia canadensis* A charming native columbine that grows in masses in the high rocky woods around Church House, and often appears on ledge rock. "I have also seen it flourish in pea gravel," says Page. "It seems to grow in sun or shade, flowering in May. It is charming to cut for small bouquets, with, for instance, lilies of the valley." 60cm. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

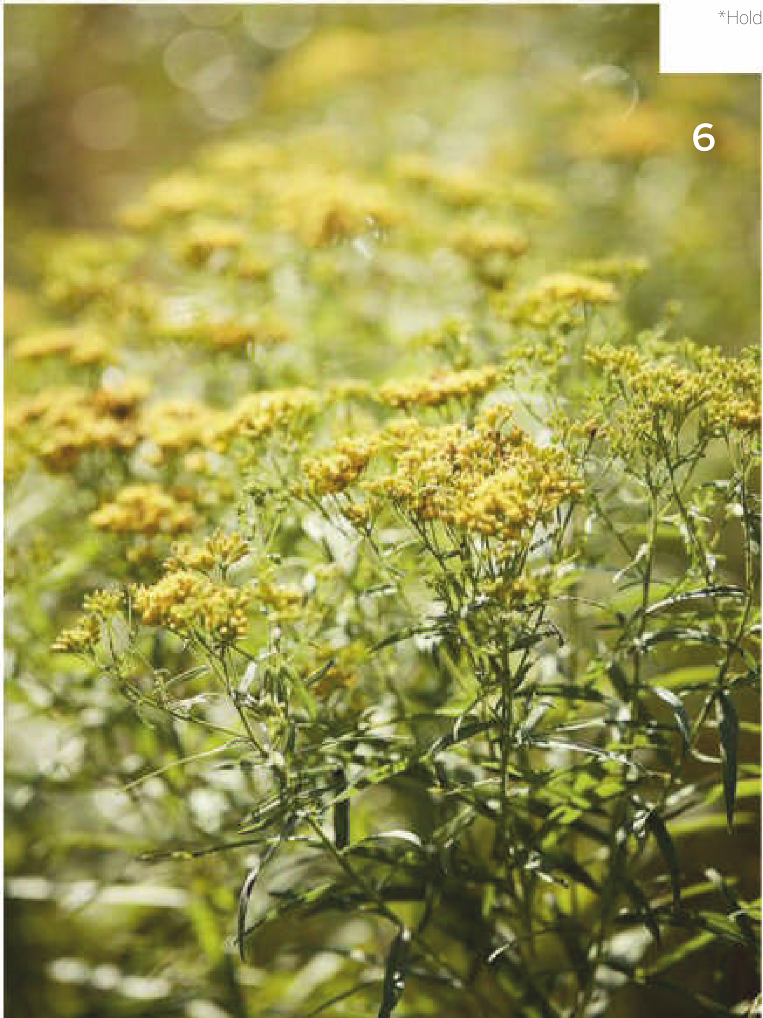
5 *Helianthus* 'Lemon Queen' Considered a native hybrid, this pretty lemon-yellow sunflower flowers most of summer, and is a favourite with bees and goldfinches. Needs full sun. 2m. AGM[*]. RHS H4, USDA 4a-9b.

6 *Euthamia graminifolia* A charming, flat-topped goldenrod that grows wild in the Church House meadows. A rhizomatous perennial that can be a bit of a thug, so best used in larger landscapes. 1m. USDA 3a-9b.

7 *Lysimachia borealis* Grows in rich, moist woodland and flowers in May. The whorl of shiny leaves are low to the ground and beautiful in themselves, but the star-shaped flowers are enchanting. A lovely shade plant. 20cm.

8 *Asplenium platyneuron* A charming small and upright fern that flourishes in the limey shade of calcareous woods. A favourite of Page's. 60cm.

[*] Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.



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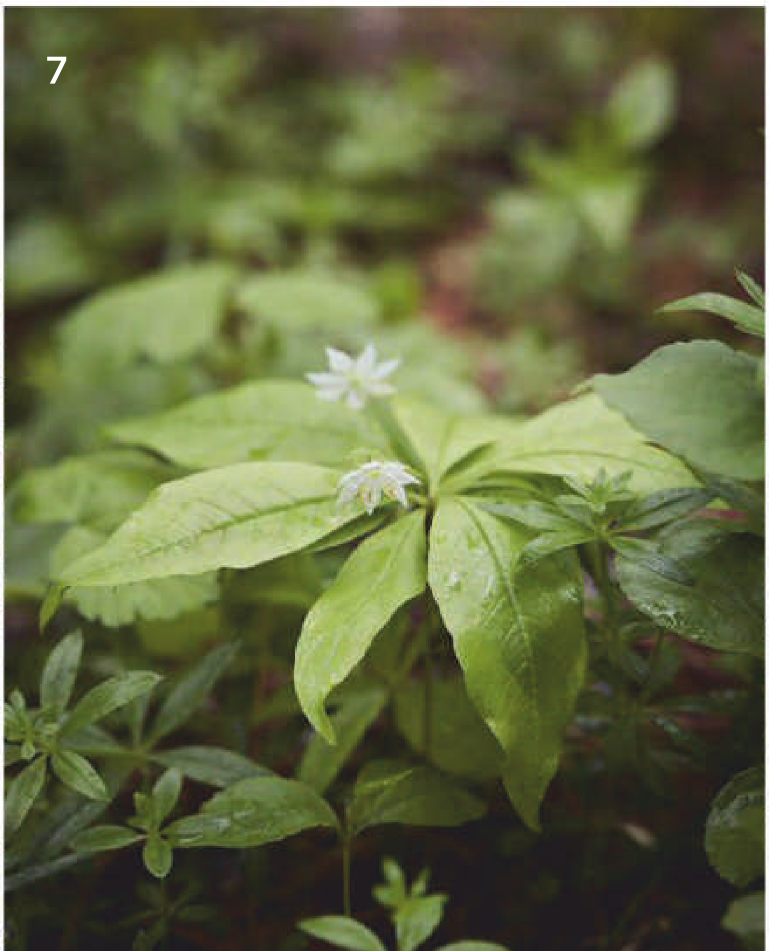

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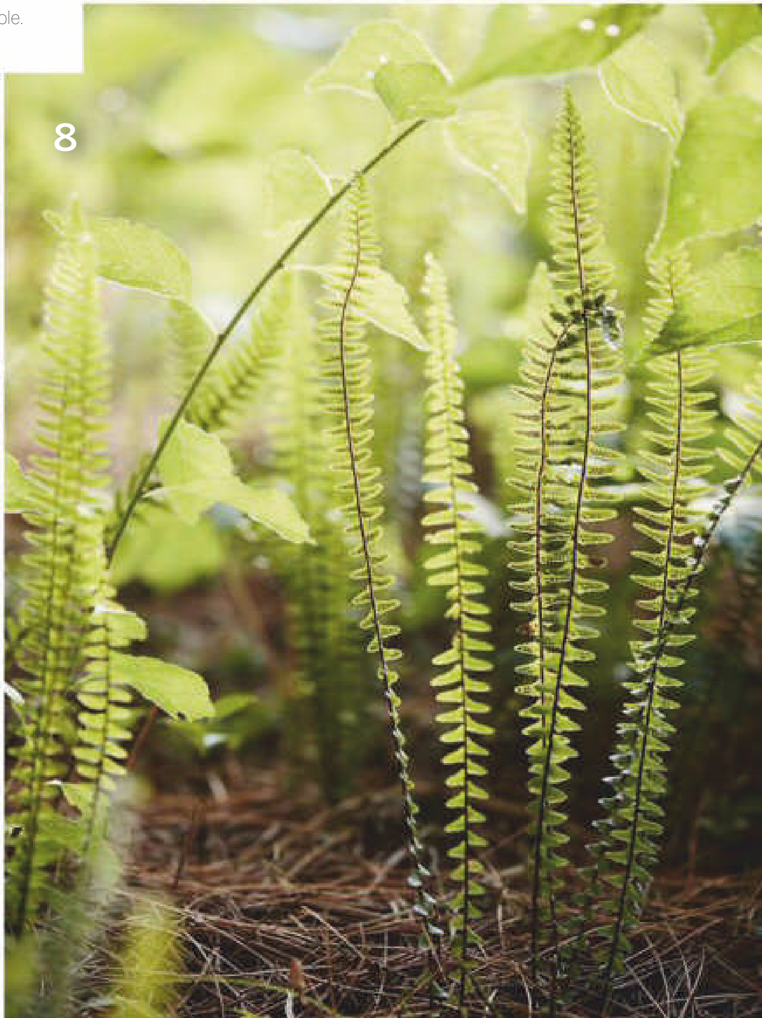

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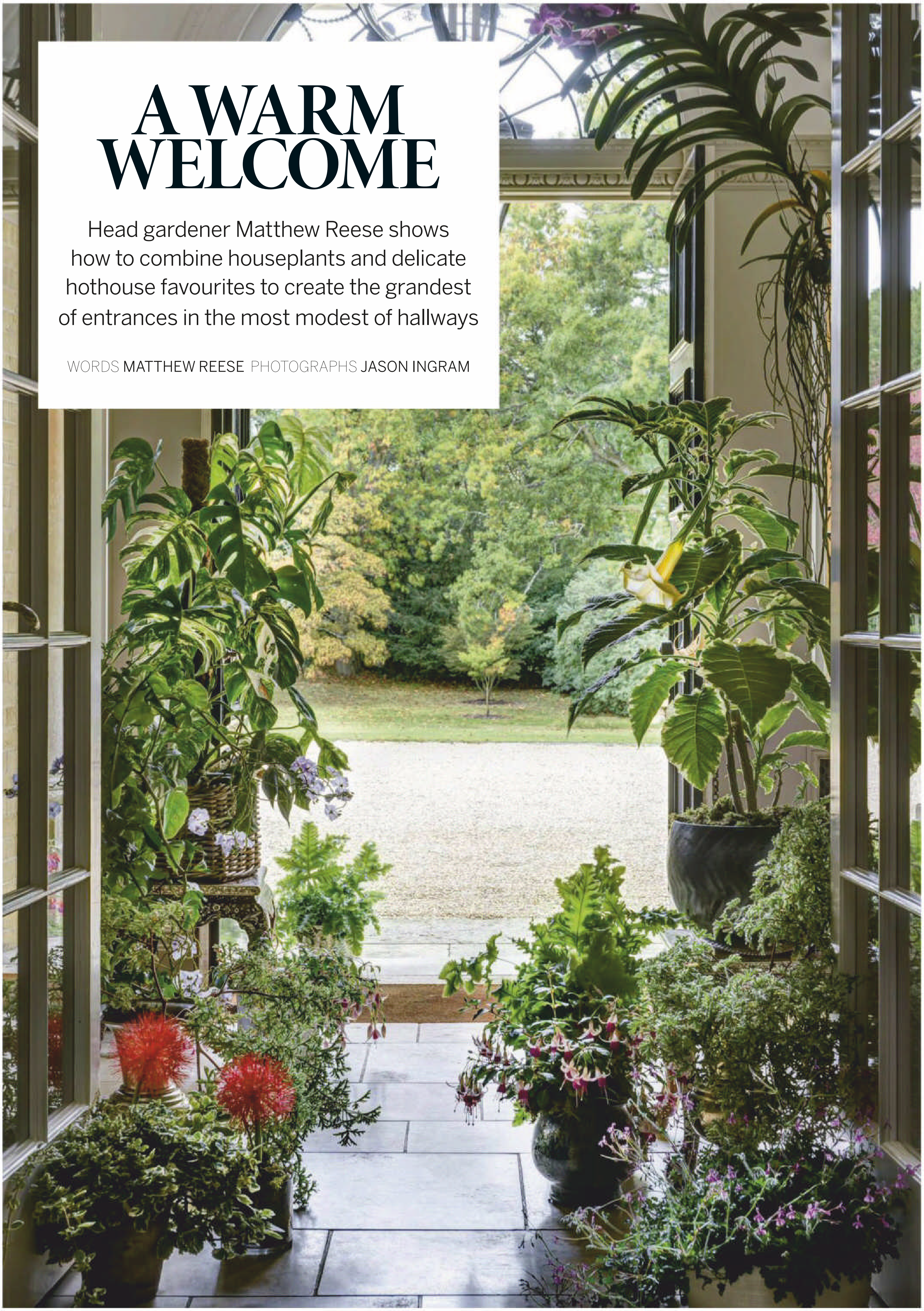
dashes of native orange to echo the way the "brilliant-orange, jewel-like butterfly weed *Asclepias tuberosa* enlivens a field of wheat-coloured grasses and Queen Anne's lace in the wild". In the cutting garden, sweet peas appear among rows of *Tagetes* 'Cinnabar', zinnias and *Tithonia rotundifolia* whose vibrant orange daisies are "favourite landing places for monarch butterflies".

The wild habitats beyond the tended garden are so balanced and beautiful that they are areas of gentle instruction to tinker in but not control. Non-native invaders are culled but the only other intervention is the mowing of an occasional "green band coursing through a feathery field", of *Schizachyrium scoparium* and smoky purple *Eragrostis spectabilis*. Pale lavender-pink milkweed *Asclepias syriaca* and mauve-lavender bergamot *Monarda fistulosa* alongside the goldenrods *Solidago juncea* and *Euthamia graminifolia* flower among tall, arching stems of *Sorghastrum nutans*. It is a flower-rich paradise. Meadows melt into the high wooded bluffs bejewelled by *Aquilegia canadensis* and *Arisaema triphyllum*, the low east wood carpeted in lush skunk cabbage leaves melds into the fen studded with panicled aster *Symphyotrichum lanceolatum* and pink swamp milkweed *Asclepias incarnata*. Page and Bosco seem to be the most contented custodians of nature.

The wild habitats beyond the tended garden are so balanced and beautiful that they are areas of gentle instruction to tinker in but not control

Facing page The fen, an open calcareous wetland, rich in minerals and plant species, is carpeted by late September in the panicled aster, *Symphyotrichum lanceolatum*. This sunlight-filled habitat contrasts the adjoining low wood where red and swamp maples, American hornbeam, *Carpinus caroliniana* and elms tower over shrubby willows and dogwoods.

This image *Anaphalis margaritacea*, grows in the high woods that are peppered with rocky outcrops among the moss- and lichen-encrusted trunks of white pine, eastern red cedar and chinkapin oak, *Quercus muehlenbergii*. A bluff leading to the picnic rock and vernal pool is scaled via rustic cedar logs set into the slope.



A WARM WELCOME

Head gardener Matthew Reese shows how to combine houseplants and delicate hothouse favourites to create the grandest of entrances in the most modest of hallways

WORDS MATTHEW REESE PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM

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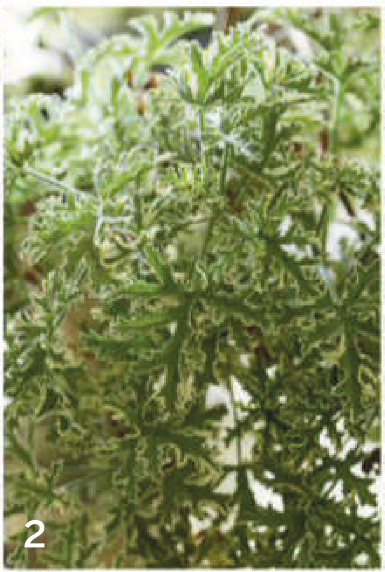
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In grey November, when the garden is on the ebb, it's lovely to lift the atmosphere in the house with plants indoors. We pay particular attention to the entrance as it sets the tone for the rest of the house, and adds a nice touch when welcoming visitors. During the warmer months, plants might greet friends on the porch and steps outside, but in autumn we keep the displays sheltered in the vestibule and hall.

Looking from the hall, the light backdrop to the doorway makes an ideal canvas for the plants to be set against, and the display can be particularly striking when the larger plants have the sunlight filtering through their foliage. The variegated form of the Swiss cheese plant makes the most of this occasion. The lustrous, unevenly presented foliage reflects the light this way and that.

When building the composition, the plants are elevated to make a fringe of foliage around the door frame. The epiphytic *Vanda* orchid is hung from the top corner of the door, and its skeletal cage creates an intriguing silhouette. Below, the *Brugmansia* and Swiss cheese plant are elevated to eye level using chairs. The display continues at ground level with foliage spilling out on to the floor from pots at various heights. It is important to remember to give each plant space to be seen, and not to crowd the pots. The blood flower, fuchsias and the other flowering plants come and go, being added to the display when at their best, and returned to the conservatory when they begin to tire. The foliage plants, such as the ferns and the pelargoniums, are more permanent.

All these plants are housed in ornamental receptacles – glass bowls and tumblers, wicker baskets, silver campanas and resin containers. I tend to use ones that do not have drainage holes to protect the floor so watering has to be done very carefully. □

Plants

1 *Pelargonium ionidiflorum* A very smart little pelargonium that produces mounds of hairy green foliage, atop which are small, bright-pink flowers held on thin, wiry stems. Deadhead to promote more flowers. 20cm. RHS H1C[†].

2 *Pelargonium* 'Lady Plymouth' A very elegant variegated pelargonium with crinkled, scented foliage. It bears pinks blooms through the summer. Cultivate in a sunny, cool but frost-free greenhouse or windowsill. 1m. AGM*. RHS H1C.

3 *Fuchsia* 'Wharfedale' A long-flowering, hardy fuchsia that produces plump flowers with pale-pink sepals and cerise petals. Keep the plants cool and moist, and feed weekly. 60cm. AGM. RHS H4, USDA 7a-9b.

4 *Phlebodium aureum* Davana (= 'Raadphle01') This wonderful mutation of the golden polypodium has lovely glaucous, jade-green leaves with a texture loosely resembling curly kale. It likes moist, light soil and shade. 30cm. AGM. RHS H1B.

5 *Scadoxus multiflorus* Known as the blood flower, this African bulb is best cultivated in a frost-free alpine house. Its orbs of tiny and bristly, thin-petaled, bright-red flowers are held atop stocky stems. 45cm. RHS H1B, USDA 9a-11.

6 *Monstera deliciosa* 'Variegata' A superb form of the Swiss cheese plant with splatted white-variegated foliage. It is rather slow growing but makes a very good houseplant. It copes well with erratic watering, shade and central heating. 3m. AGM. RHS H1B, USDA 10a-12.

7 *Solanum wendlandii* A vigorous, tropical climber from Costa Rica that throws loose sprays of pale-blue flowers from the new growth. It produces vicious, hooked thorns that help it climb. 3m plus. RHS H1B.

8 *Brugmansia* x *candida* 'Maya Variegata' A lovely tender shrub with soft green and white marble-variegated foliage. It produces large pendent, trumpet-shaped flowers in pale apricot on the new growth. Night scented. 3m. RHS H1B.

9 *Vanda* hybrid These epiphytic orchids have attractive, plicate foliage and produce sprays of large, magnificent flowers in myriad colours. The blooms are held on strong stems and last for weeks. 1m. RHS H1B.

Where to buy

Burnham Orchids
Forches Cross, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ12 6PZ.
Tel 01626 352233, orchids.uk.com
Orchid specialist that offers mail order.
Monday to Friday, 10am-3pm.

Fibrex Nurseries
Honeybourne Road, Pebworth, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 8XP. Tel 01789 720788, fibrex.co.uk
Specialist in ferns and pelargoniums. Offers mail order.
Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm, September to February (see website for spring and summer opening times).

Lower Kenneggy Nurseries
Rosudgeon, Penzance, Cornwall TR20 9AR.
Tel 07584 838695, lowerkenneggynurseries.co.uk
Large collection of unusual and exotic plants from across the world. Tuesday to Saturday, 10am-5pm.
Closed December to February.

New Covent Garden Flower Market
Nine Elms Lane, Nine Elms, London SW8 5NX.
Tel 020 7720 2211, newcoventgardenmarket.com
Trade and retail. Monday to Saturday, 4-10am.

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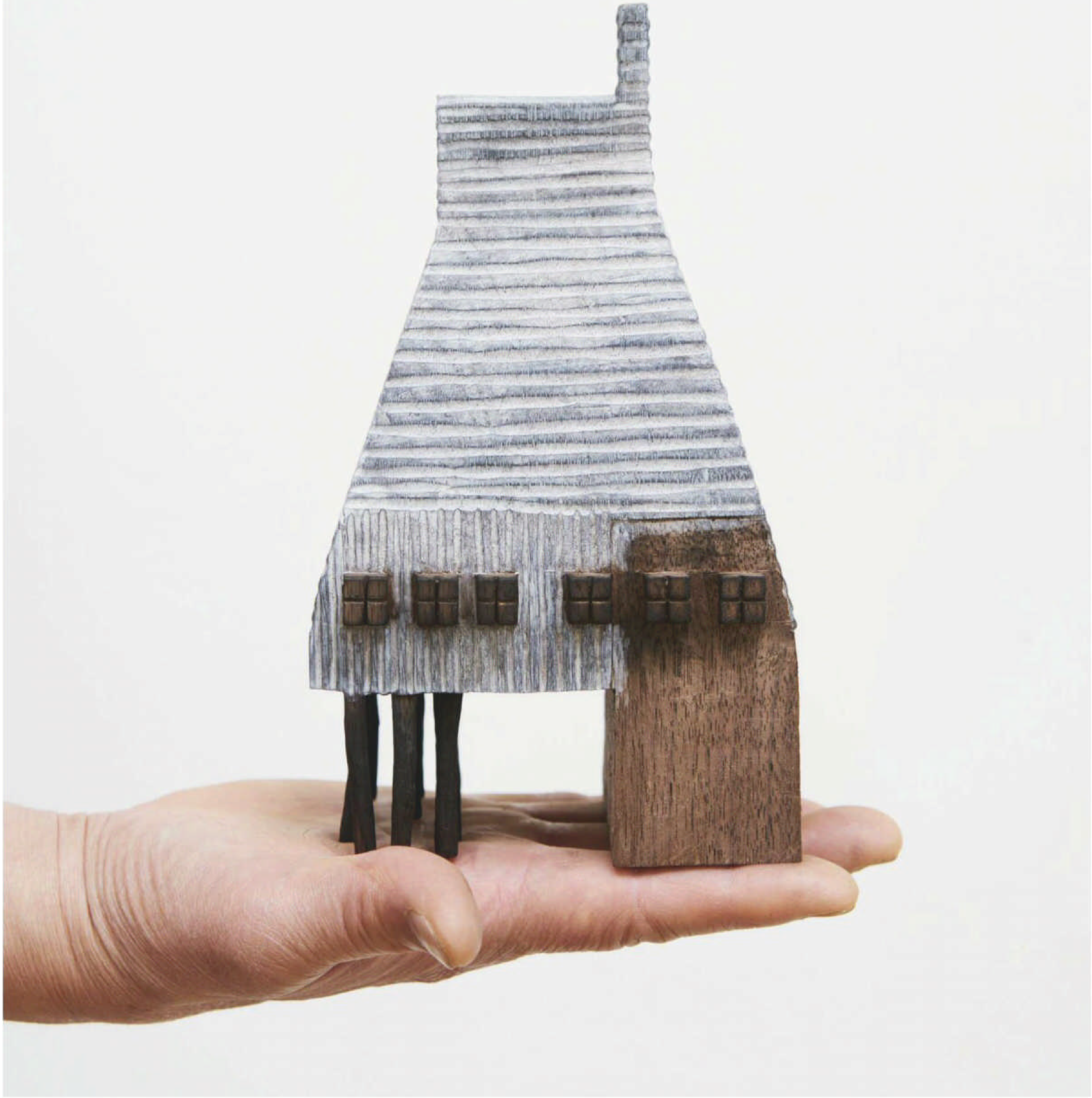
*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. [†] Hardiness ratings given where available.

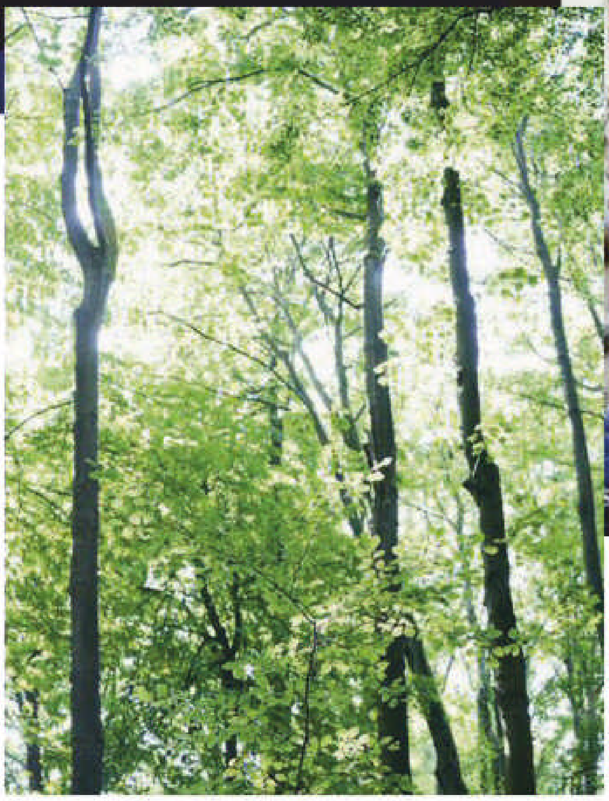
Dream houses

Dreamed, imagined or seen? Yukihiro Akama's extraordinary wooden sculptures blur the lines between fantasy and reality

WORDS **NATASHA GOODFELLOW** PHOTOGRAPHS **LISA LINDER**



Often I find the house in the wood. The grains and the knots show me where to cut



Facing page Standing around 10-25cm high, Yukihiro's miniature houses, marked with incredible tiny detail, are carved from mostly native British wood to which Yukihiro adds natural materials, such as stone and clay.

Above Yukihiro adds a waveform texture to one of his wooden houses using a Japanese chisel known as a *chokokuto*.

Right Woods near Yukihiro's Yorkshire home are a source of inspiration, and wood and clay.

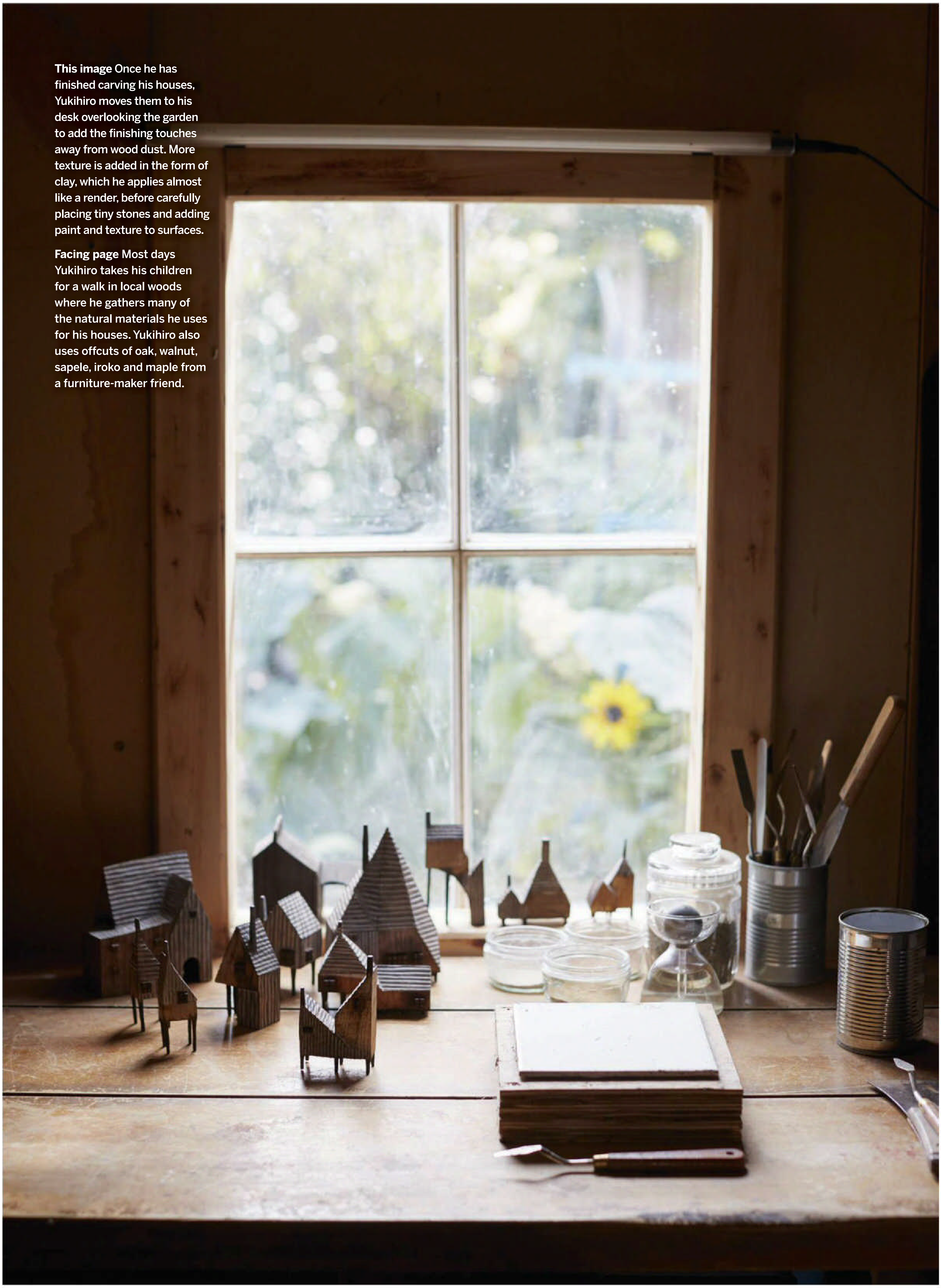
Far right Yukihiro uses a Japanese carving knife called a *kiridashi* to smooth the wood.

Yukihiro Akama has always loved wood. As a child, living in Miyagi Prefecture in the north of Honshu, Japan's main island, he would walk in the pine and cedar woods with his father, foraging for mushrooms and berries. As a student of architecture and landscape design, and a self-confessed hippie, he focused his work around the properties and possibilities of bamboo. And, since graduation, wood has formed the core of a career that has spanned carpentry, house building and design, a spell as a lumberjack, and now art – as a designer and maker of miniature houses, which are at the same time both comfortingly familiar and unsettlingly strange.

The same could perhaps be said of Yukihiro's current situation. On the one hand, he lives in Huddersfield with his wife Ryoko and two children, goes out to work (he works on his sculptures early in the morning and late into the night) and bakes sourdough whenever he can. But he never planned to be here. It was only after the meltdown of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in the Japanese earthquake and tsunami of 2011 that the family, then living just 50km from the reactor, fled to England, where Ryoko had previously lived. "It was a big change, especially for me," says Yukihiro, with typical understatement. "I thought I could understand English before we came here."

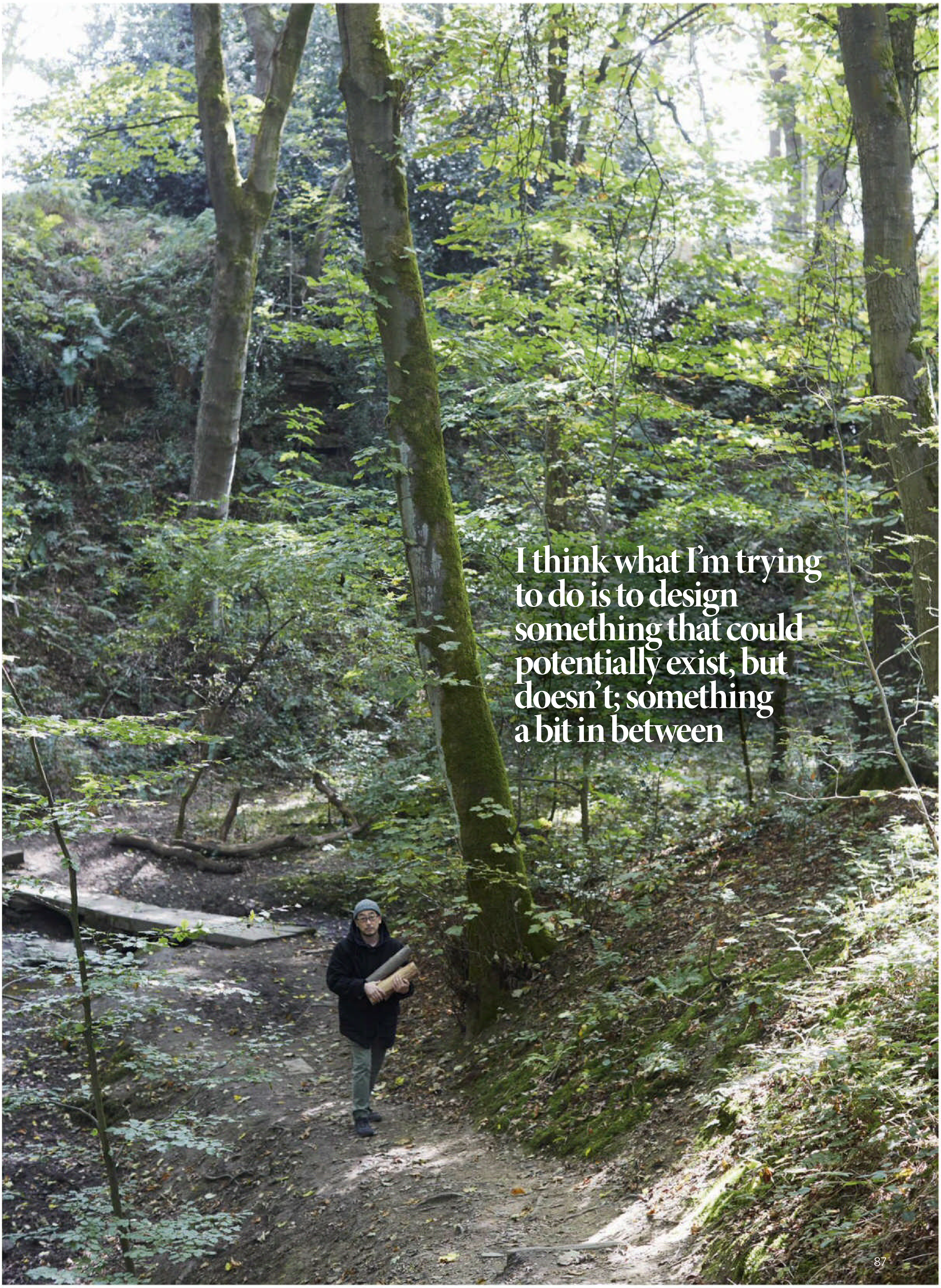
The language barrier meant Yukihiro struggled to find work as a designer or joiner, until he met Samantha Allan, founder and curator of The Shop Floor Project in ▷

To continue turn to page 88

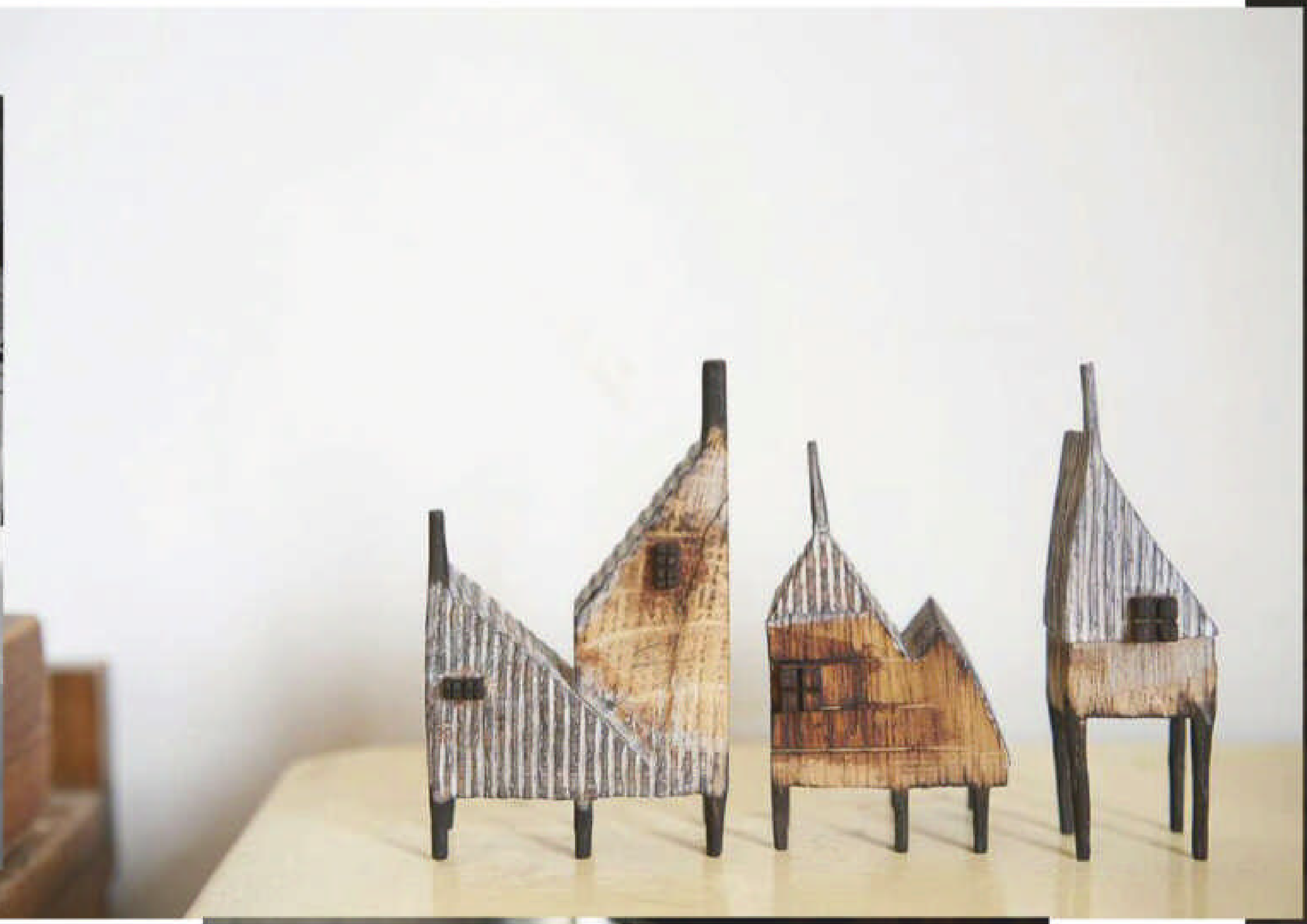


This image Once he has finished carving his houses, Yukihiro moves them to his desk overlooking the garden to add the finishing touches away from wood dust. More texture is added in the form of clay, which he applies almost like a render, before carefully placing tiny stones and adding paint and texture to surfaces.

Facing page Most days Yukihiro takes his children for a walk in local woods where he gathers many of the natural materials he uses for his houses. Yukihiro also uses offcuts of oak, walnut, sapele, iroko and maple from a furniture-maker friend.



I think what I'm trying to do is to design something that could potentially exist, but doesn't; something a bit in between



Above To create the tiny details, such as cross marks on the windows, Yukihiro uses small Japanese saws called *nokogiri*.

Above right While Yukihiro's miniature houses have an other-worldly, dream-like quality to them they are inspired by the traditional style of stilt houses found in Japan and other Asian countries.

Right Yukihiro can sometimes spend a whole day working on the surface textures on the wood before adding detailed expression, paint and polish.

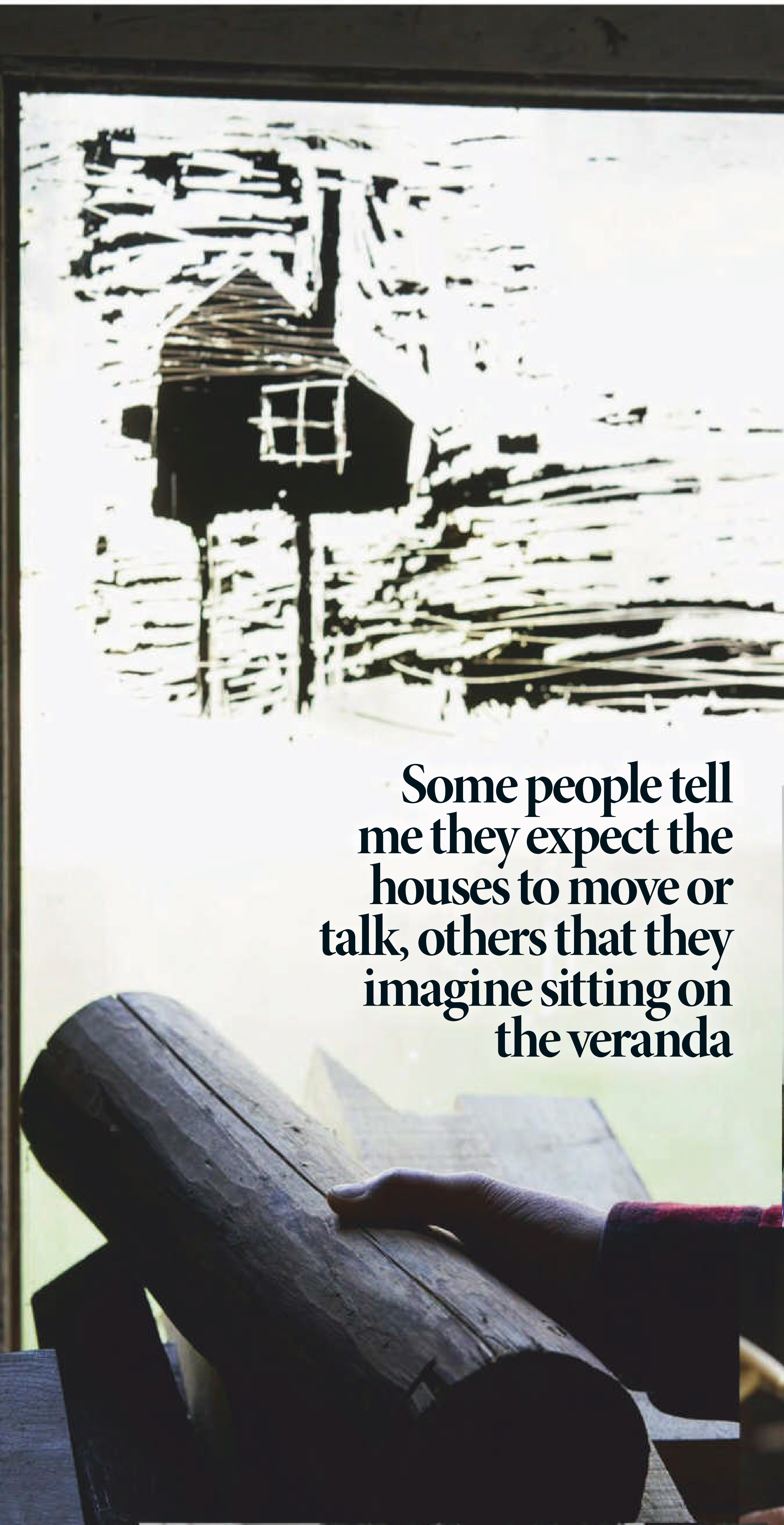
▷ Ulverston at an arts festival. "We got talking about architecture and I told her about a traditional timber and mud store house I'd built for my mother's gardening tools," says Yukihiro. When Sam suggested he make some small houses for an exhibition of Japanese artists she had coming up, Yukihiro was unsure. "I felt that the creative part of my brain had turned off," he says. "But then I found a block of wood in the garden when I was cutting weeds so I thought I'd try."

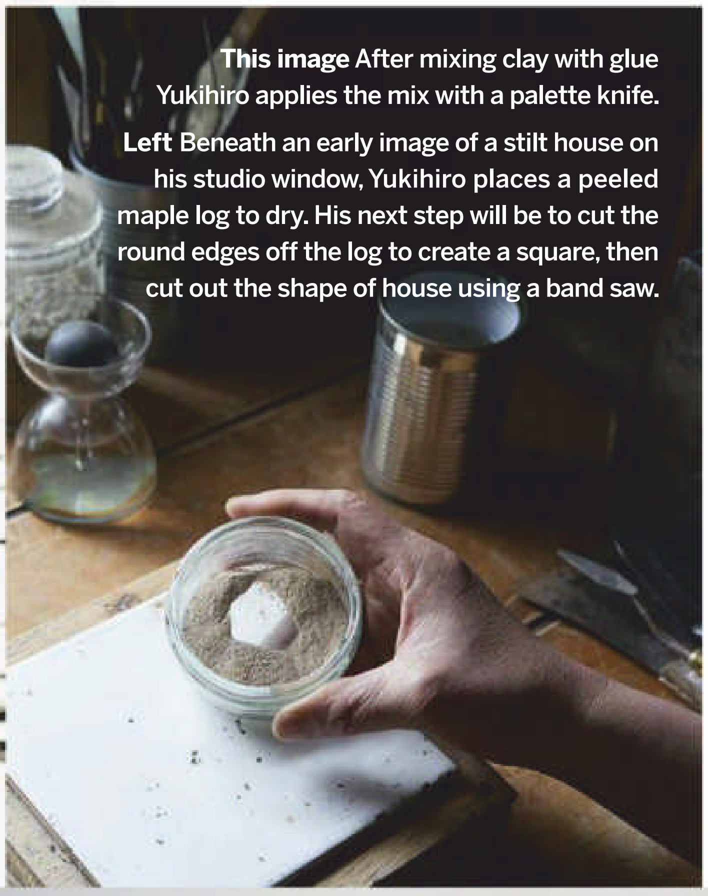
His first series sold out in days, and since then he has made countless more in his garden studio. Inspiration could come from anywhere – barns, smokehouses, chimneys and water towers have all sparked collections, all chiselled from a single block of wood, mostly oak, and most of them offcuts from a furniture-maker friend. Sometimes he starts with a sketch but not always: "Often I find the house in the wood," he says. "The grains and the knots show me where to cut." Some, like his rocking or river house series, sit on platforms; many more teeter on stilts, themselves often inspired by the shapes of tree trunks. Some have walls blackened with fire or daubed with clay gathered in the local woods with his children, others he decorates with tiny pebbles. All seem to have stories to tell.

Aside from his evident pleasure in being creative again, the joy for Yukihiro lies largely in what those stories could be. "Some people tell me they expect the houses to move or talk, others that they imagine sitting on the veranda and holidaying there. I think what I'm trying to do is to design something that could potentially exist, but doesn't; something a bit in between." Or, to put it another way, something that makes you wonder – and that they certainly do, in both senses of the word. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Yukihiro's miniature houses are available to buy or commission through The Shop Floor Project. Tel 01229 584537, theshopfloorproject.com
You can also find out more about his work at yukihiroakama.wixsite.com





This image After mixing clay with glue Yukihiro applies the mix with a palette knife.

Left Beneath an early image of a stilt house on his studio window, Yukihiro places a peeled maple log to dry. His next step will be to cut the round edges off the log to create a square, then cut out the shape of house using a band saw.

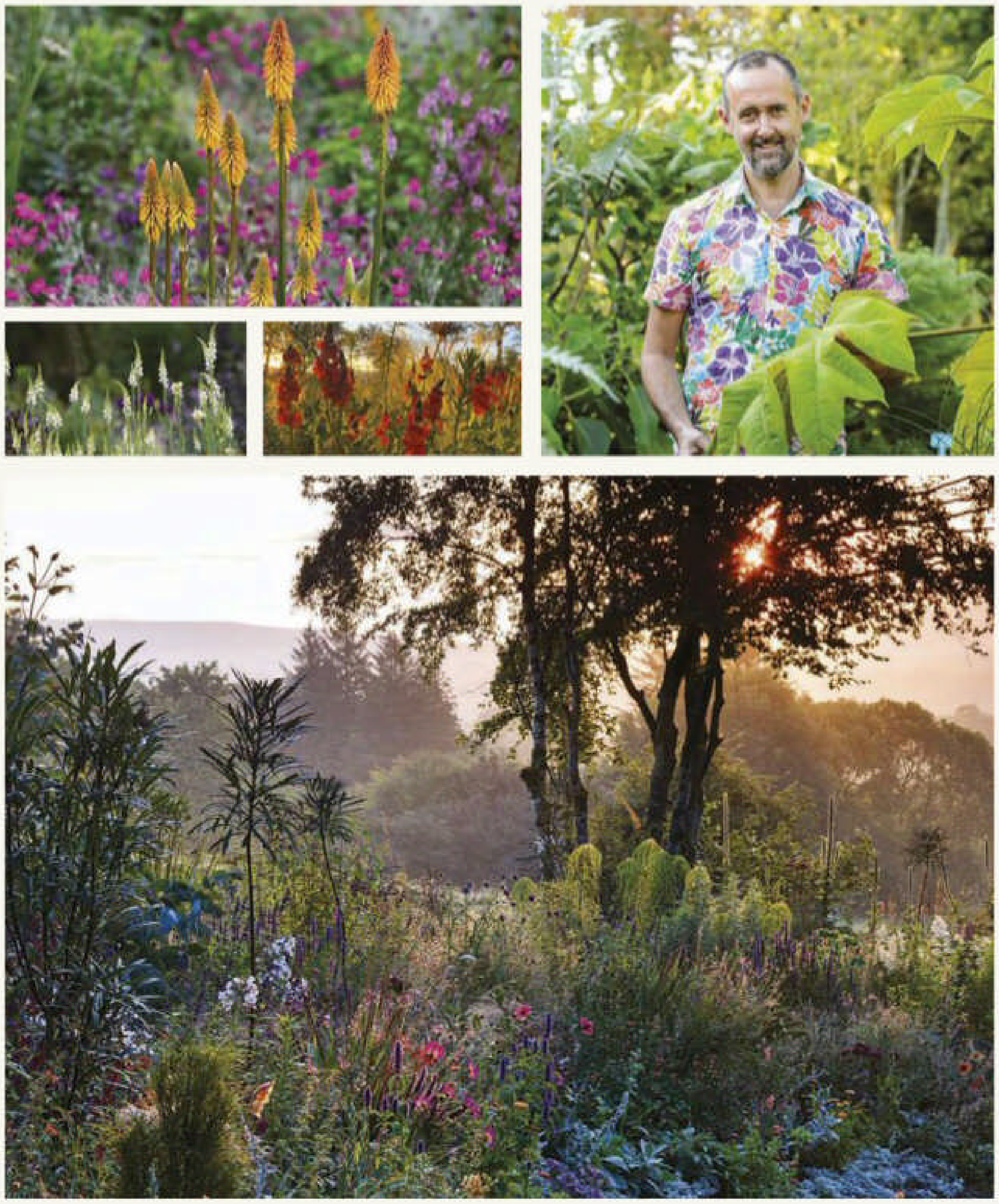
Some people tell me they expect the houses to move or talk, others that they imagine sitting on the veranda

PHAIDON
Studio Olafur Eliasson The Kitchen

Above One of Yukihiro's finished houses, the slightly uncanny looking *Ruin House*, takes pride of place on his kitchen shelf.

Left As part of the finishing process Yukihiro chars the legs of one of his pieces with a fire torch, before polishing.

Far left After a long day in the studio, Yukihiro relaxes by perfecting his sourdough bread. Taking the same meticulous approach to baking as to his artworks, he keeps notes on each week's bake.



New! Online Courses

With **Jimi Blake** from Hunting Brook Gardens

Join plantsman Jimi Blake for his new series of online gardening courses filmed at his spectacular Hunting Brook Gardens.

Suitable for the enthusiastic amateur or professional horticulturist, there are 3 courses each with 4 modules:

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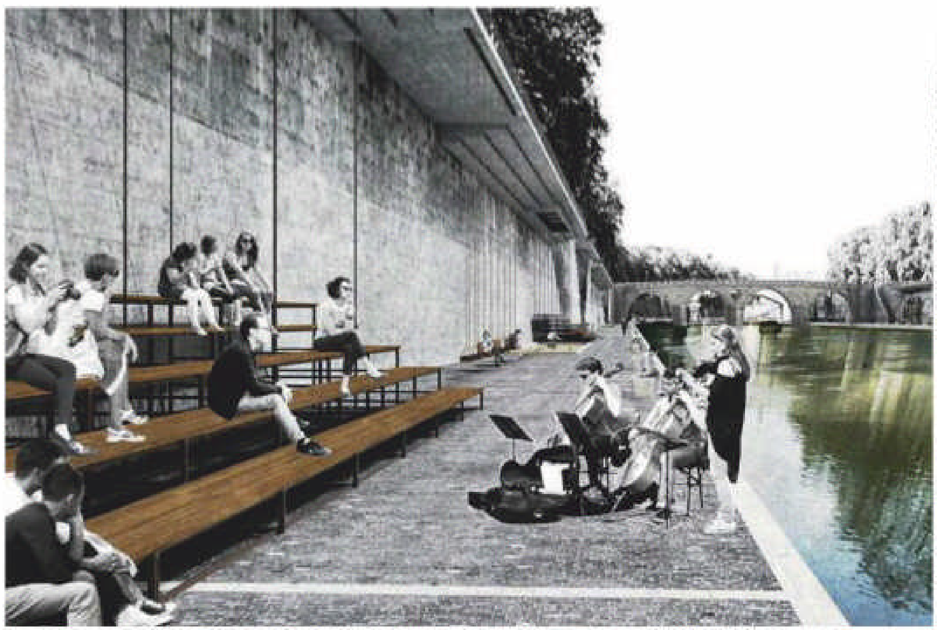
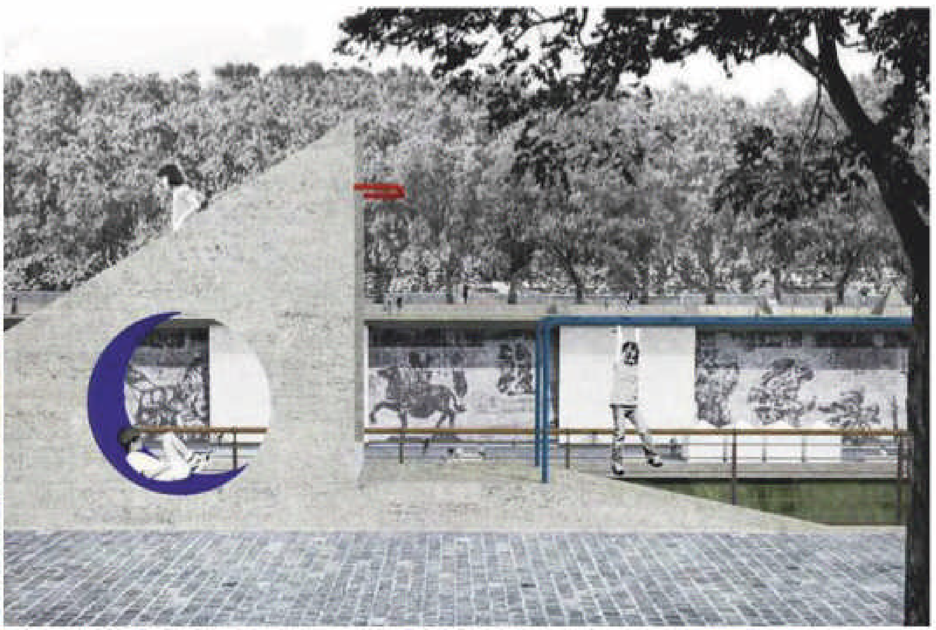
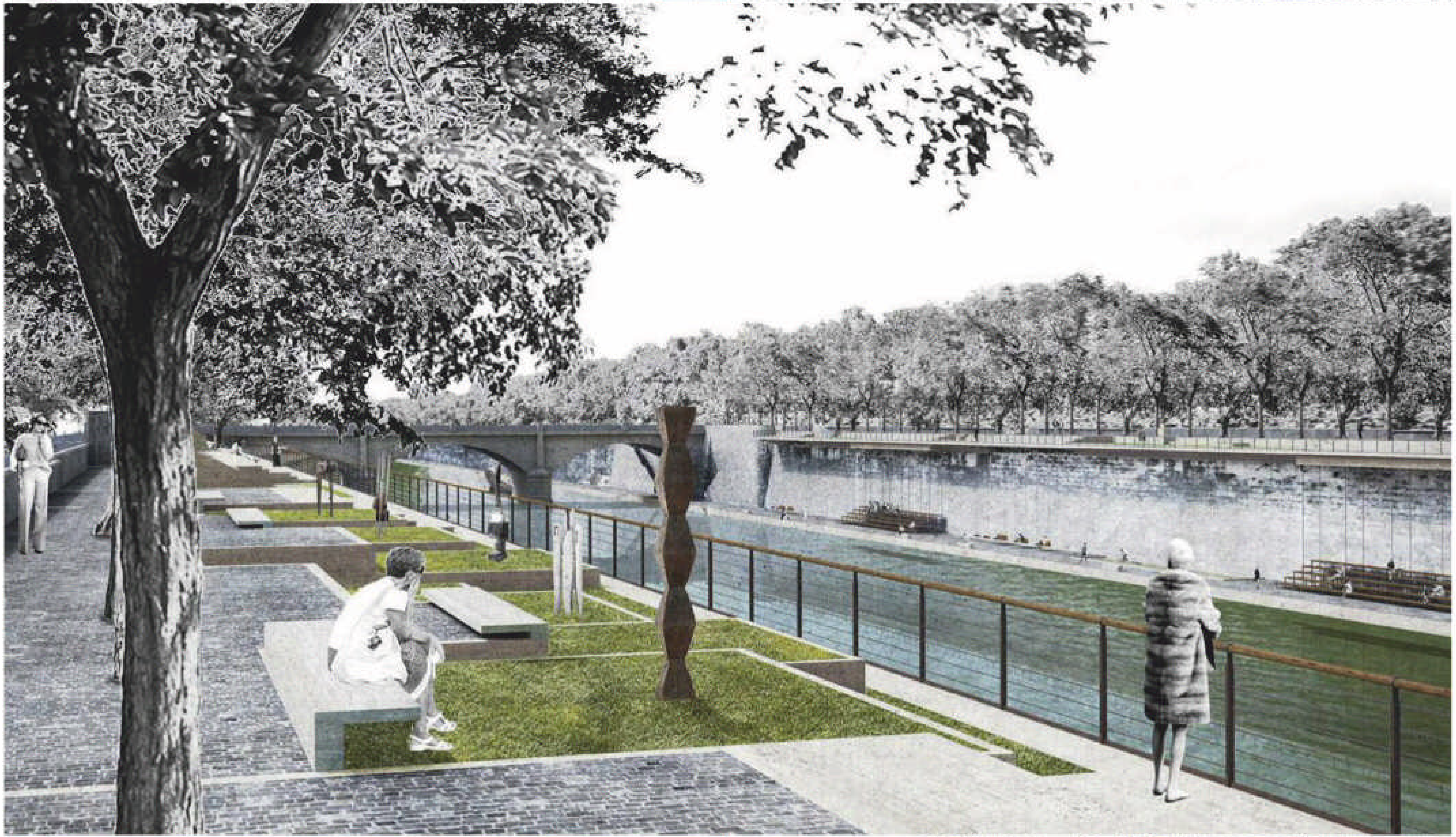
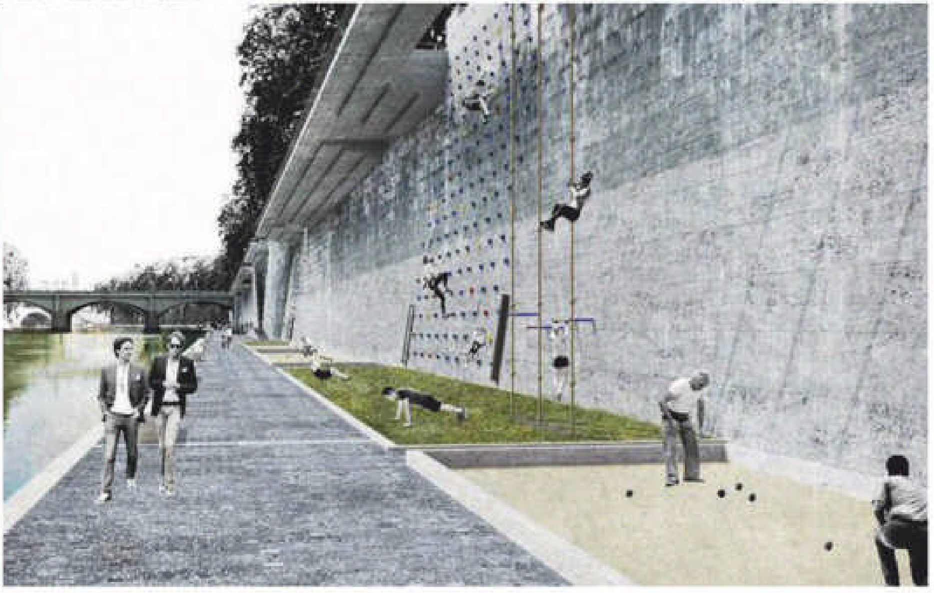






OPEN FORUM

New York-based architecture practice Ballman Khapalova – working in collaboration with the American artist Kristin Jones – has submitted a concept proposal for a new, split-level design for Piazza Tevere, which straddles a perfectly rectangular section of the River Tiber in Rome. At street level, a series of gardens with contemporary water features that evoke the tradition of Rome's courtyard gardens will extend to a ledge, which will project over a riverside promenade. On the lower level, covered areas will provide spaces for seating, bocce courts and arts performances, while wall climbing facilities will join contemporary artworks on the embankment walls. **ballkhap.com**



News

COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI

① SOUTHWARK ALMSHOUSES

A productive roof garden and communal gardens framed by mixed evergreens will provide the green spaces for a proposed new almshouse community in south London. The new, sustainable development will create 62 new one-bedroom flats for Southwark Charities' Blackfriars site, which has been the site of an almshouse since the 18th century. Double-height terraces on alternate floors will overlook the gardens as will a shared residents' lounge. The development will also include flexible office space, which will help to pay for the new homes. **southwarkcharities.co.uk**

② BALI AWARDS

London-based designer Jilayne Rickards has won awards in two categories at this year's British Association of Landscape Industries National Landscape Awards. Her design for a small garden in London, The Urban Retreat (shown), where most of the materials used were recycled or re-used from the existing site, won the Design Excellence Award for a scheme under £50,000 and the Registered Designer & Registered Contractor Joint Submission Award. A virtual awards event will be held on 4 December when the Principal, Special and Grand Award will be announced. **baliwards.co.uk**

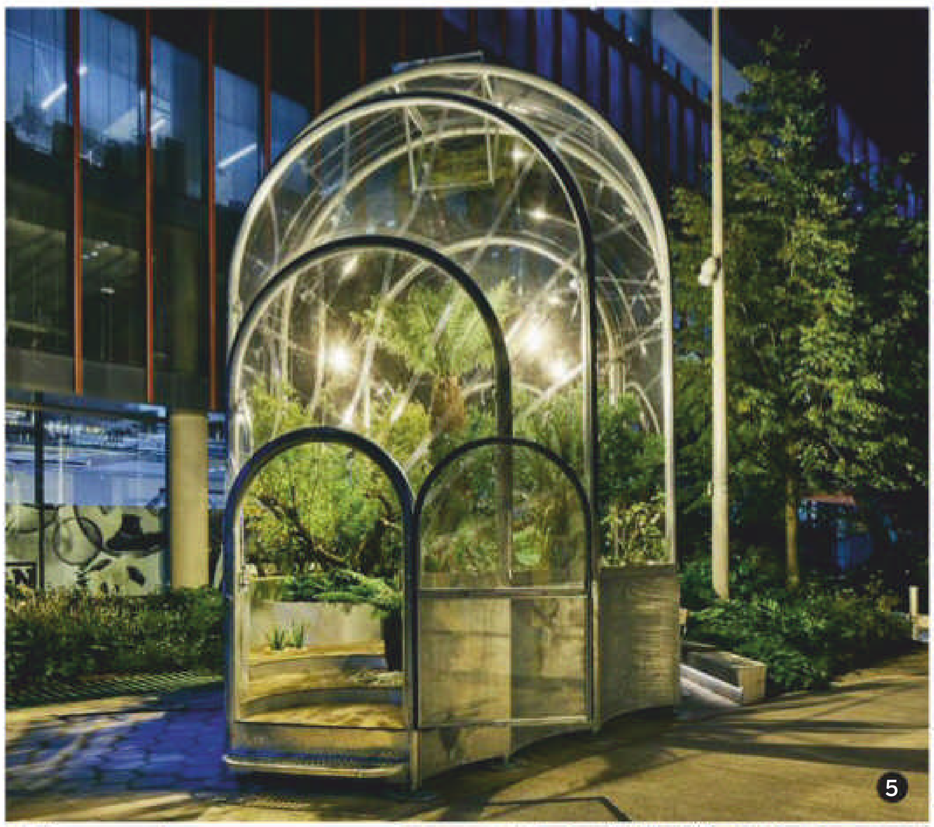
③ NEW DESIGN SHOW

Planted, a contemporary design show that will feature products, such as the Horticus living wall shown, from companies with sustainability at their core, is due to launch next May. Planted took part in this year's London Design Festival hosting a three-part series of panel discussions on themes of sustainability, carbon capture, and repair and recycling. You can view these discussions, along with a series of one-to-one interviews with designers including Dan Pearson and Oliver Heath, on the Planted website, where you'll also find details of the companies already confirmed to take part in Planted 2021. **planted-cities.co.uk**

④ GREENSCAPE FOR SERVICE STATION

A service station on the M1 near Leeds has been welcomed as part of a green corridor that links Temple Newsam House to Rothwell Country Park. As well as a green roof that covers the undulating main building, Skelton Lakes Service Station also includes an RSPB Visitor Centre and viewing deck that offers views across the bird life-rich Skelton Lake and surrounding countryside. New landscaping by Brambledown Landscapes includes more than 400 trees and hundreds of herbaceous perennials. New trails and improved pathways provide better access into the 30-acre site. **brambledown.com**

2 MARIANNE MAJERUS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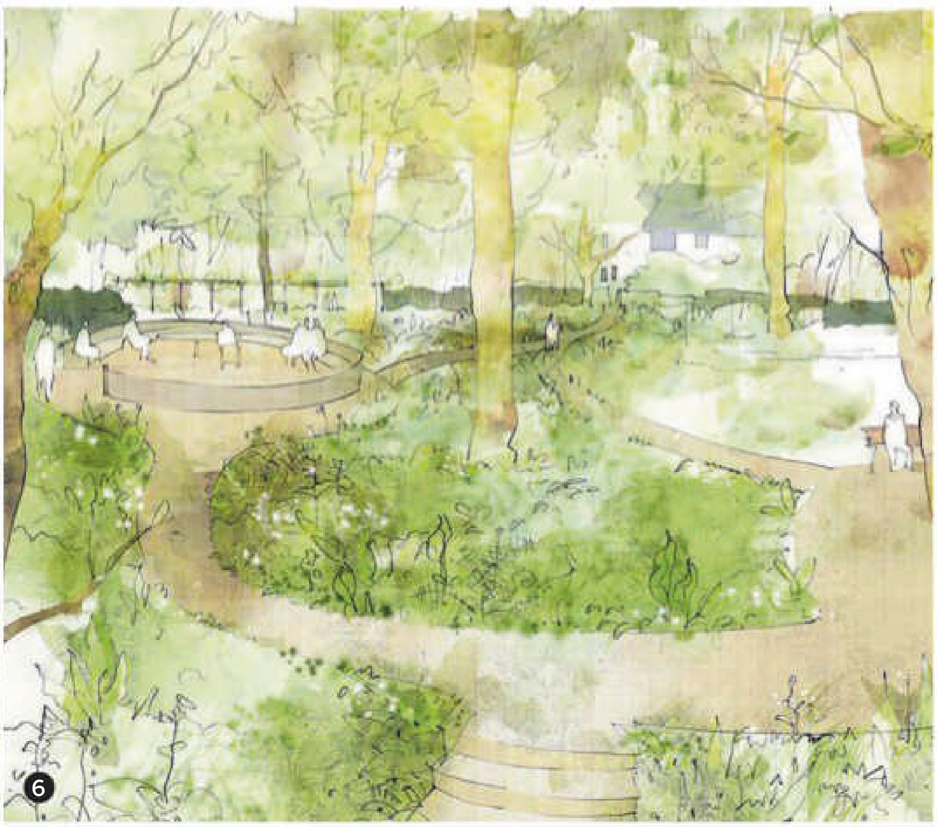
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⑤ HOTHOUSE PAVILION

Pomegranates, mangoes and avocados fill the planters inside an arched greenhouse in Stratford, east London, as part of this year's London Design Festival. Built by architects Studio Weave to highlight the dangers of rising temperatures due to climate change, The Hothouse features edible plants that could be grown outdoors in London in the next 30 years. Its shell is made of transparent, recyclable plastic that allows passersby to see the plants clearly. The planting, which fills a series of galvanised steel planters, was designed by Tom Massey. **londondesignfestival.com**

⑥ GREENFINGERS GARDEN

Designer Thomas Hoblyn has designed a woodland garden for the Greenfingers-supported Haven House Children's Hospice in Essex. Haven House is on the edge of Epping Forest and Hoblyn's Garden of Reflection makes the woodland adjoining the existing garden accessible. Long boardwalks create pathways through the trees to secluded spots and larger areas where groups can gather. An understorey planting of ferns and bulbs, and a stumpery, add seasonal interest. It is hoped the garden, funded by Clarins, will be completed by the spring. **havenhouse.org.uk**

⑦ CREATING A GREEN CITY CENTRE

Plans to create what will be the largest, new city centre green space in the UK have been approved by Leeds City Council. Aire Park will transform the redeveloped South Bank district with a series of connected open spaces, including a sensory garden, a wet woodland area, a grassed amphitheatre and a Cherry Walk. The iconic Tetley Building and the Grade II-listed Salem Chapel will frame the Tetley Triangle, a public events space for concerts, markets and outdoor cinema. Leeds City Council will manage the park on a 250-year lease from developers Vastint UK. **airepark.co.uk**

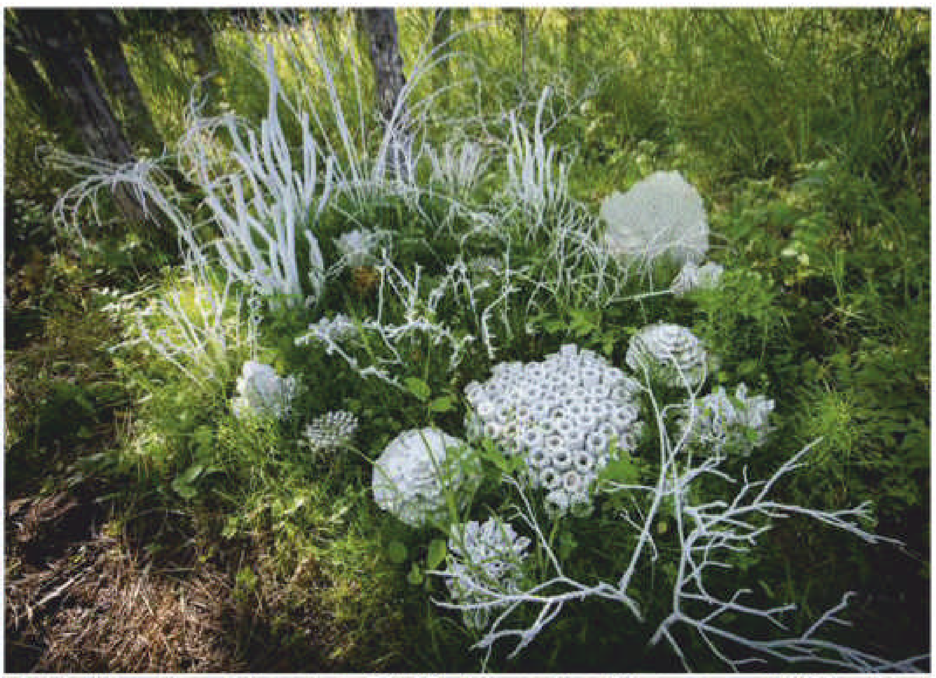
⑧ NEW SGD AWARDS

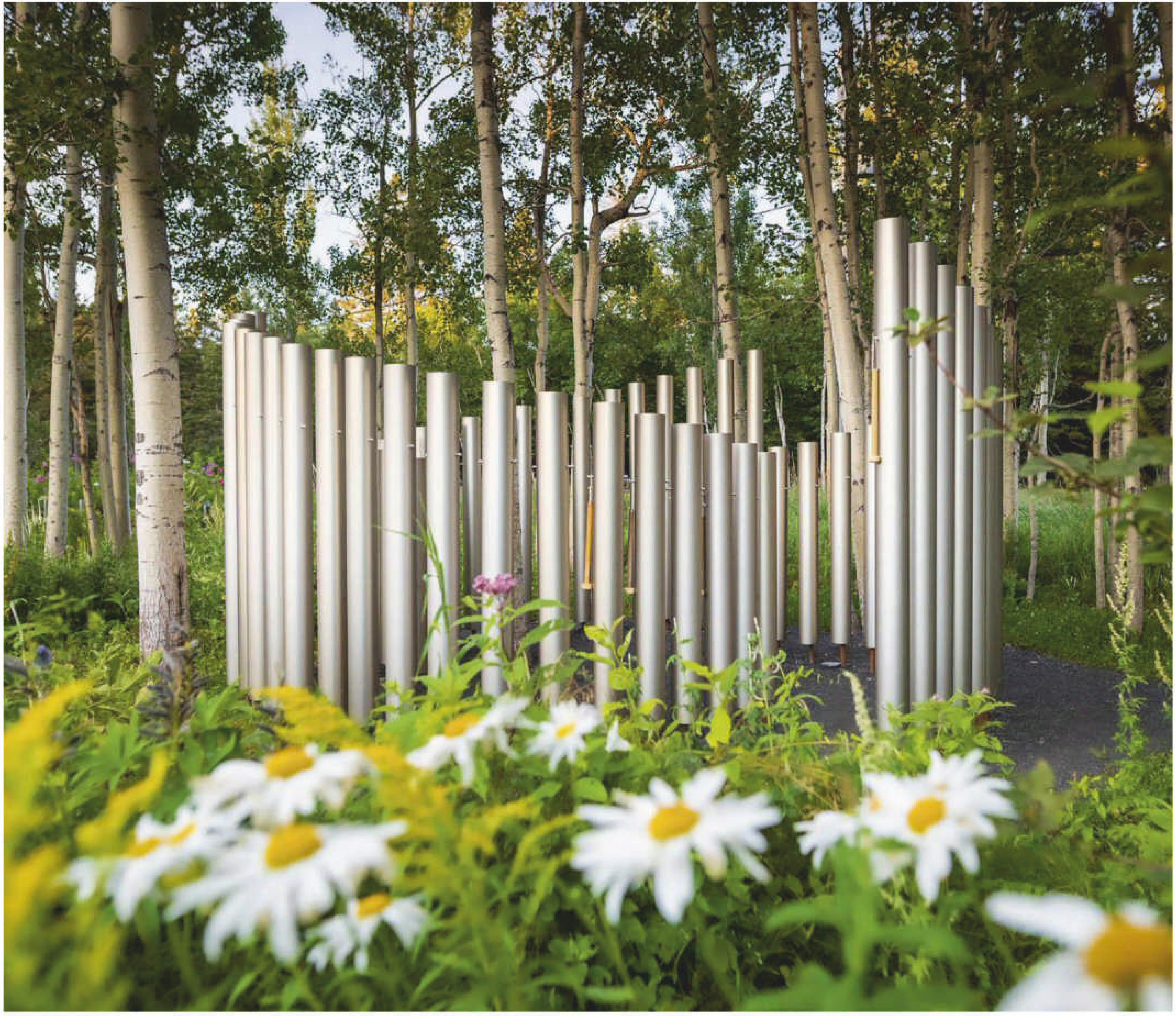
The Society of Garden Design has announced two new awards for 2021. The Design with Time in Mind Award recognises gardens that have stood the test of time, while the Design for the Environment Award, which is open to the public to enter, is for a garden or landscape where the design focus is on environmental contribution and sustainability. "We want to encourage anyone who has created a sustainable, wildlife-friendly habitat that demonstrates the great reward gardening can give to nature and the environment, to enter this award," said Lynne Marcus, chair of the SGD. **sgd.org.uk**

7 VASTINT

INTERNATIONAL GARDEN FESTIVAL

Five designs were selected from 200 entries for the 2020 edition of the International Garden Festival at Les Jardins de Métis/Reford Gardens in Quebec, Canada. Among the installations on the theme of métissages (mixed or cross breeding) was *Forêt Corallienne* (right), a hybrid world of limestone coral forms embedded in the natural forest, designed by Lucie Bulot and Dylan Collins, and *Corps de Résonance* (below), which is both an acoustic and visual installation by a multidisciplinary team from Montreal. The musical folly consists of a serpentine arrangement of pipes that vibrate and mix with the sounds of the forest.
internationalgardenfestival.com





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Garden of Medicinal Plants – Chelsea Physic Garden Photo: R Alexander

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Log stores

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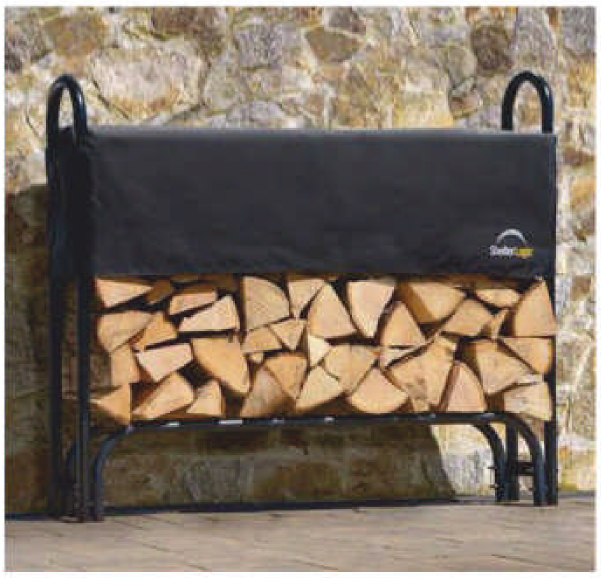
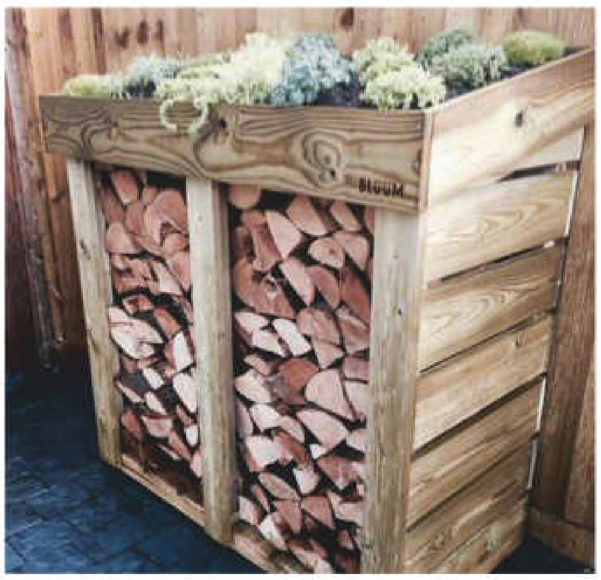
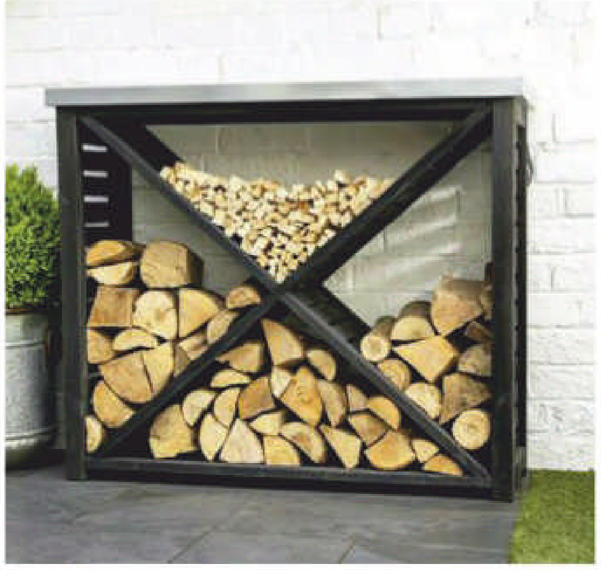
COMPILED BY KATIE DUTTON



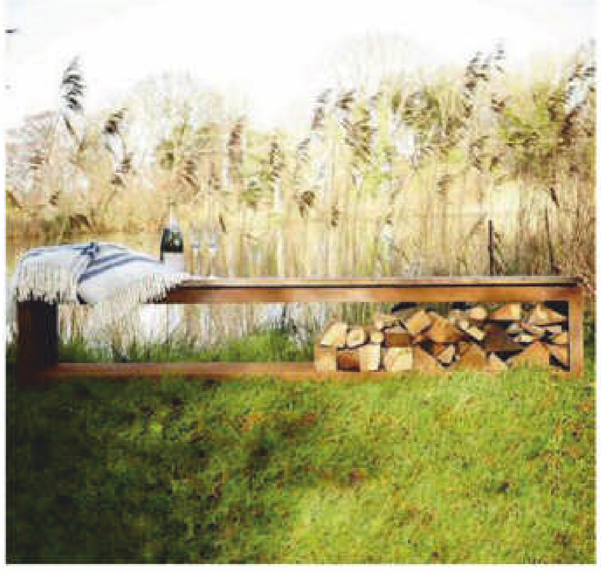
ALL ROUND VENTILATION
Rowlinson Shelter Logic Log Rack,
£83.99, 126x118cm, Rowlinson Garden Products,
01829 261121, rowgar.co.uk



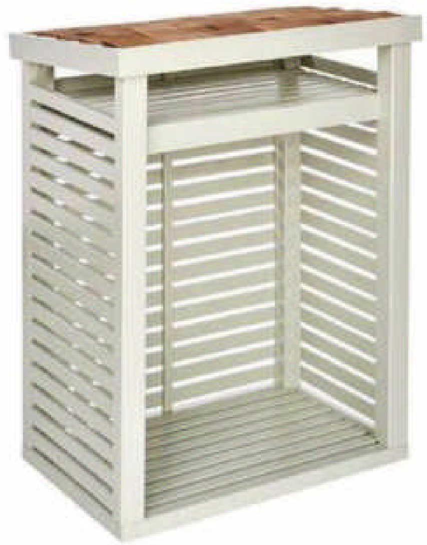
GREEN ROOF
Maxi Log Store,
£399, 166x128cm, Bluum,
01275 462647, bluum.co.uk



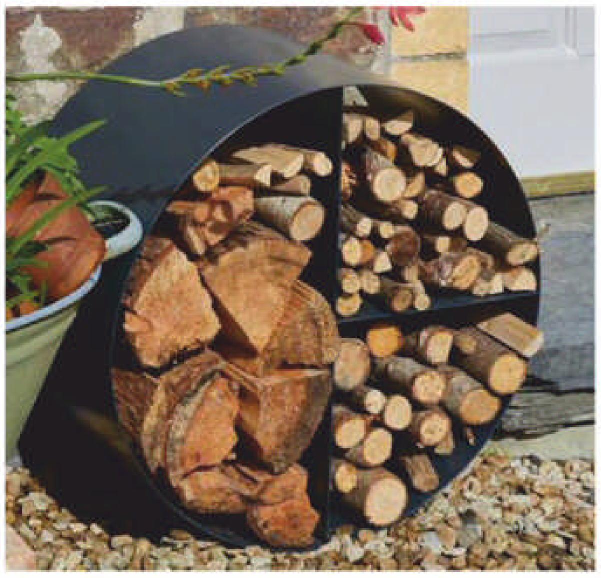
CONTEMPORARY
Moreton Cross Log Store,
£280, 110x91cm, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



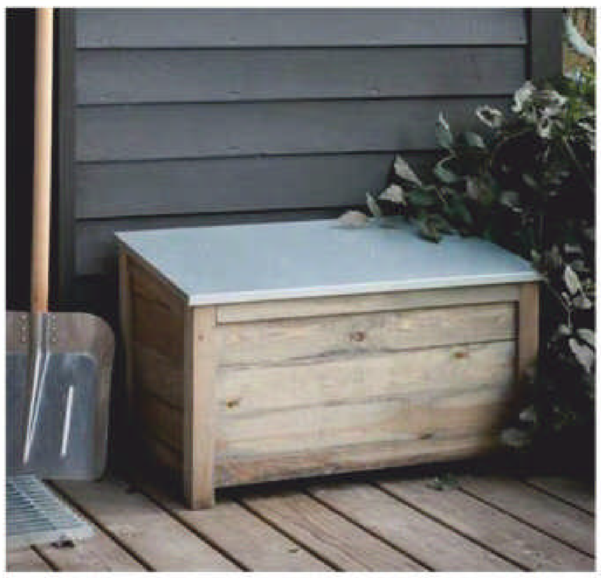
DUAL PURPOSE
Corten Garden Bench & Log Store,
£745, 200x43cm, Harrod Horticultural,
0333 400 6400, harrodhorticultural.com



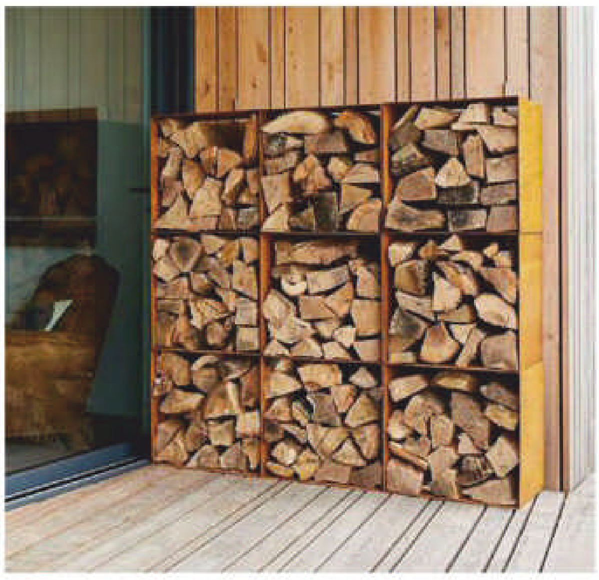
PAINTED FINISH
City Log Store in Orford cream,
from £312, 89.5x132.5cm, Garden Trellis,
01255 688361, gardentrellis.co.uk



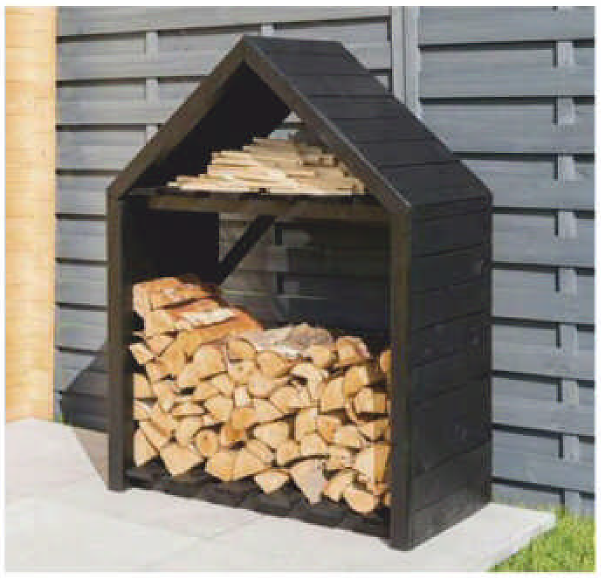
IN THE ROUND
The Woodstock Original Circular Log Store, small,
£250, 50cm diameter, Parker & Coop,
01932 850140, parkerandcoop.com



WEATHERPROOF
Aldsworth Outdoor Storage Box,
£180, 80x43cm, Garden Trading,
01993 845559, gardentrading.co.uk



GEOMETRIC
The Woodstock Squares Log Store,
£795, 150x150cm, Parker & Coop,
01932 850140, parkerandcoop.com



COMPACT
Black Apex Log Store,
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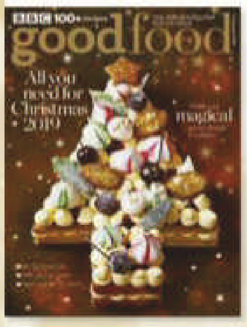
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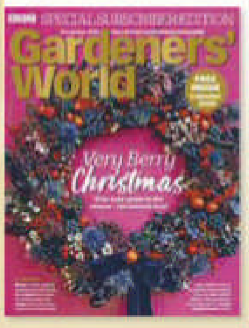
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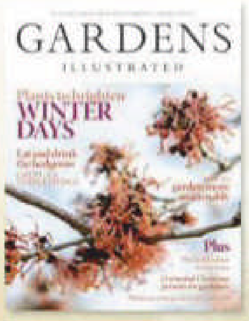
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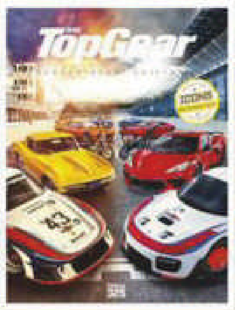
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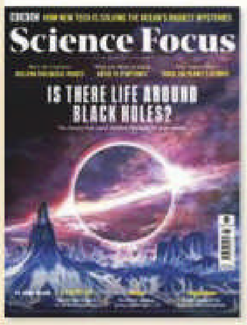
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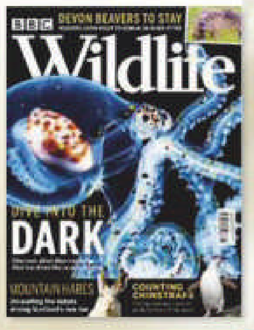
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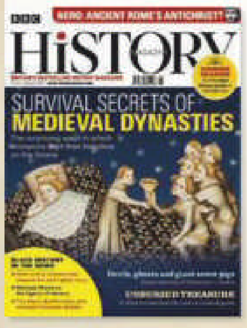
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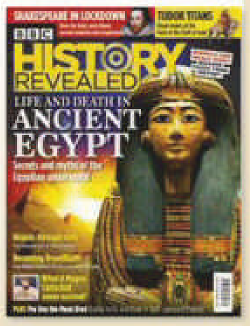
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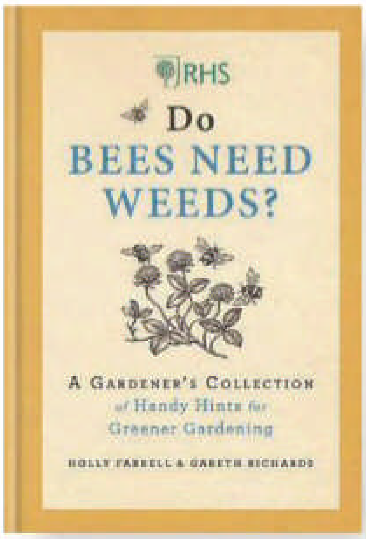
DOWNTOOLS

Book reviews, crossword, back issues, reader offer, competition

The relationship between gardens and the designs of Christian Dior – as in this Jardin Fleuri tulle dress, embroidered with feathers to create an impressionist garden, from Maria Grazia Chiuri's haute couture spring-summer collection, 2017 – are explored in *Dior In Bloom*, reviewed on page 102.

PHOTOGRAPH: © LAZIZ HAMAN / *DIOR IN BLOOM* / CHRISTIAN DIOR PARFUMS



RHS DO BEES NEED WEEDS?: A GARDENER'S COLLECTION OF HANDY HINTS FOR GREENER GARDENING

by Holly Farrell and Gareth Richards

Octopus Publishing, £14.99
ISBN 978-1784727147

A compendium of practical and easy-to-understand advice that will help you to garden in sustainable and environmentally friendly ways.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a plantsman and writer.

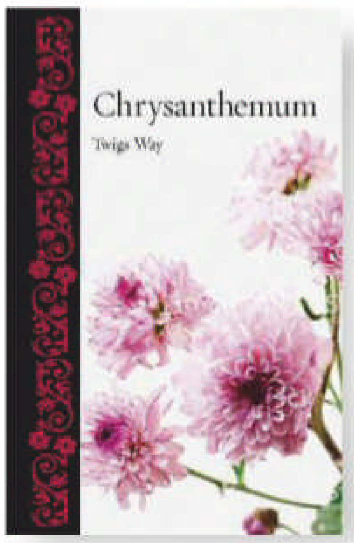
The authors of *Do Bees Need Weeds?* point out that gardens in the UK occupy more space than the combined area of all of the country's Nature Reserves, and so the way we garden potentially has an enormous impact on the natural world and particularly on climate change and biodiversity. The aim of this book is to help even those whose gardens might extend only to a few pots or a window box to become greener gardeners.

The book is laid out in a question-and-answer format that encompasses all the sorts of questions that we gardeners ask ourselves as we try to garden responsibly and with minimum negative impact on the environment.

The range is wide: Are garden lights harmful? Can I conquer builders' rubble? Is it ever OK to have a bonfire? Are any vegetables pest-proof? All these questions are briefly answered and then the surrounding issues are expanded and elaborated. The answer to a question about green corridors, for example, explores the importance of connecting gardens to the wider landscape, how this can be achieved and goes on to explain pollen networks for bees and 'hedgehog highways'.

More than 200 pages of answers results in a book that is densely packed with information, but this is laid out in bite-sized sections and with attractive illustrations that render even complex issues easy to understand. Comprehensive coverage of the subject makes this book particularly suitable for first-time gardeners.

It can sometimes feel that in gardening we carry on our shoulders a large part of the burden of saving the planet, with strictures on what products to use, what to grow and how to garden. Happily, this book is never prescriptive and shows how we can take pleasure in gardening while at the same time doing something positive for the environment.



CHRYSANTHEMUM

by Twigs Way

Reaktion, £16
ISBN 978-1789142051

This fascinating book looks at the long and noble history of chrysanthemums before they became 'the flower of choice for uninspired husbands'.

Reviewer Ambra Edwards is an author and garden historian.

When I was a girl, my Italian-born mother would be aghast if visitors arrived with a bunch of chrysanthemums: to her, they were funeral flowers that had no place among the living. For the Chinese, on the other hand, chrysanthemums betoken long life, and are a welcome gift to the elderly.

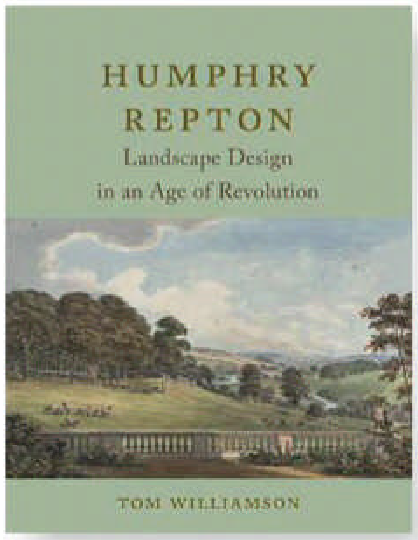
These are the kinds of meanings unpicked in *Chrysanthemum*, the latest in Reaktion's Botanical series – small, handsomely produced hardbacks that recount the cultural and historical significance of various familiar plants. With the chrysanthemum, so rich in spiritual, philosophical and artistic associations, it is on to a winner, especially when the story is told by the inestimable garden historian Twigs Way.

With her vivacious prose and unerring knack for unearthing the absurd or delicious detail, Way could probably fashion the minutes of your local parish council into absorbing history: with this flower, she is in her element, following the bloom from its Chinese origins to its apotheosis as the imperial symbol of Japan, through its reinvention by European florists to its adoption as the fall flower of the USA, without which no Thanksgiving would be complete.

Along the way we meet a lively cast of devotees – gardener Samuel Broome, declared 'the floral oracle of the working classes'; Victorian garden guru Shirley Hibberd, who believed the flower's sunny blooms discouraged suicides; the globe-trotting Du Cane sisters, who did so much to popularise the Japanese garden in Europe; and inmates of the Gila River internment camp, doggedly growing chrysanthemums in the Arizona desert.

The illustrations are a delight, ranging from Chinese ceramics to evocative 19th-century postcards from Hiroshige to Monet and Mondrian. Who knew that Mondrian loved to paint chrysanthemums? But then, this is a book packed with unforgettable facts.

BOOK REVIEWS



HUMPHRY REPTON: LANDSCAPE DESIGN IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION
by Tom Williamson

Reaktion Books, £35
ISDN 978-1789142990

A finely produced and beautifully illustrated look at Repton's career. Scholarly yet readable, it's a must-have book for any enthusiast of garden history.

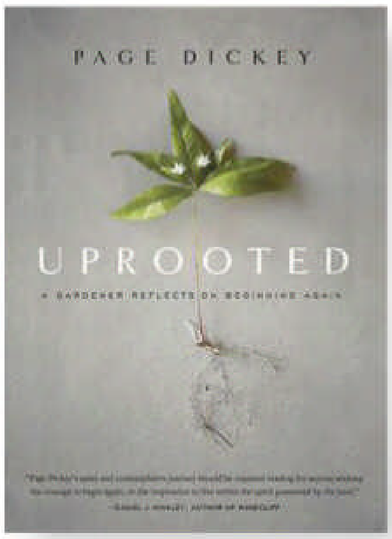
Reviewer Tim Richardson is a garden critic and regular columnist.

This book is late: the Repton bicentenary celebrations were two years ago. But no matter – this is the best general study of the Regency designer available, and stands as a complement to Stephen Daniels' book, published some 20 years ago.

The opening chapter is a brilliant summary of the career and influence of a designer who is generally considered to have been the heir to 'Capability' Brown. Tom Williamson describes the ways in which Repton diverged from the Brown style – chiefly in his emphasis on flowery terraces and shrubbery lawns around the house – and how his personality was entirely different. Brown was a businessman and fixer, whereas Repton thought of himself as an artist and a gentleman.

The author places due emphasis on another key area of difference: the fact that Repton published a great deal in his lifetime, whereas Brown wrote nothing. In fact, Repton stated in 1803 that he wished his 'Fame to be established' on his 'opinions in writing' rather than his works on the ground. Repton's books and his theories around what the author calls 'the psychology of landscape' are discussed, although the influence of these ideas – especially in America – is perhaps underplayed. The originality of the theories is also not adequately questioned in the context of the number of theoretical works on drawing (and later watercolour) produced during the craze for the Picturesque from the 1780s.

It was always going to be difficult to say anything new about Repton's Red Books – with those celebrated before-and-after views of properties – but there is originality elsewhere. The work of John Adey Repton, the designer's son and collaborator, is analysed seriously for the first time and the influence of the French designer René de Girardin is advanced as being of even more consequence than that of Brown. Overall, the book's tone is scholarly yet accessible, and mercifully jargon-free.



UPROOTED: A GARDENER REFLECTS ON BEGINNING AGAIN
by Page Dickey

Timber Press, £21.99
ISBN 978-1604699579

Lessons on starting over from one of America's best-known garden writers, whose move to a new garden brought a renewed relationship with nature.

Reviewer Tania Compton is a garden designer and writer.

Uprooted: A Gardener Reflects on Beginning Again by Page Dickey is essential reading for any gardener looking for inspiration and encouragement be they embarking on a new project or just reminding themselves of the art and process of garden making.

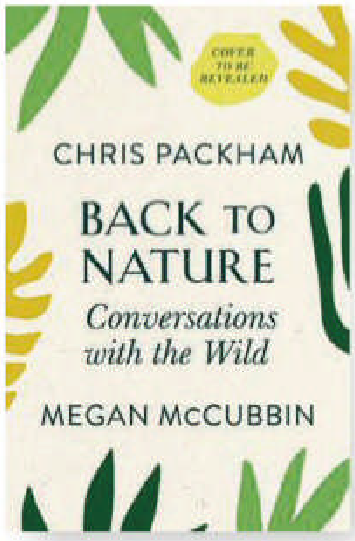
The book charts the triumphs and occasional travails of starting from scratch in your seventies, or, in the case of Page's husband Bosco, whose presence is fondly felt throughout, in your eighties. Instead of heading south for the sun they opted for New England with a garden around the house that they can manage with minimal help, surrounded by meadow pastures and woods.

'In the years I have left I simply want to savor the outdoors and garden for the joy of it'. A joy that is liberally imparted to the reader. From seed sowing to woodland ecology, Dickey distills a lifetime's knowledge and observation into this masterpiece of garden and nature writing.

It doesn't matter if your garden isn't in the climactic equivalent of USDA hardiness zone 5, Dickey deftly weaves anecdotes with precise recipes for the best way to garden in any climate. This is a book liberally yet lightly laced with universal horticultural truths. Thanks to Dickey I can now discern between *Athyrium* and *Dyopteris* ferns and will never forget that 'sedges have edges' as a way of distinguishing them from grasses.

Any of us feeling complacent about making changes or weary but hesitant about a big leap forward in our gardens can take heart from Page and Bosco's bravery at grasping more than the nettle and heed an old maxim Dickey shares preaching patience toward newly planted shrubs or perennials: 'Sleep, creep, leap.' Ngoc Minh Ngo's glorious photography is a mirror to Dickey's prose.

Practical and poetic this paean to nature is an epicurean adventure of a horticultural life well lived.



BACK TO NATURE: CONVERSATIONS WITH THE WILD

by Chris Packham and Megan McCubbin

Hodder & Stoughton, £20
ISBN 978-1529358063

Told through personal stories and fascinating science, this passion-packed book captures the essence of how we feel about wildlife.

Reviewer Catherine Smalley is a freelance writer and gardener.

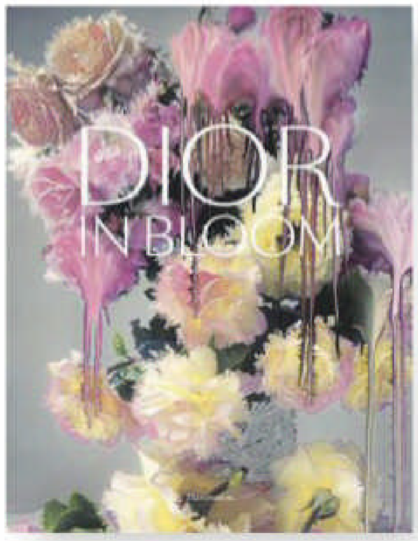
During lockdown 'we witnessed the palpable rapture of a world waking up to wildlife,' writes Chris Packham in his latest book, co-written with stepdaughter Megan McCubbin. The duo's *Self-Isolating Bird Club*, an off-the-cuff daily nature broadcast from their New Forest home, was a runaway success, live-streamed by an audience of eight million. *Back to Nature* is the follow up to this surge of interest and the message is clear: nature was there for us, now we need to pay back the favour.

There is advice on what we can do to help wildlife at home, such as replacing 'boring' lawns with wildflower patches or digging a pond, but the scope of the book is far wider than that of a wildlife gardening manual. Packham and McCubbin delve deep into the reasons behind our disconnection from the natural world and explore why systemic change is needed to address our current climate and environment emergency.

Drawing on scientific studies, conservation stories and personal anecdotes, the book meanders between discussions on the importance of nature for our mental health, the merits of species reintroductions, what makes for effective conservation, whether petitions really make a difference and the impact of industrial farming on our wildlife.

The main text is scattered with sparkling jewels of fascinating science on everything from how trees communicate to what birds dream of when they sleep. There are some truly inspiring tales too, such as the community buyout of Langholm Moor in order to return 10,500 acres, previously managed for grouse shooting, to their former wild glory.

Rousing, polemical and heartfelt, *Back to Nature* is not afraid to challenge the status quo and it will fill you with a determination to take action. As Packham says: 'I think the only way to guarantee to get things done is to do it ourselves – so that's me, and that's you.'



DIOR IN BLOOM

by Alain Stella, Naomi Sachs, Justine Picardie, Jérôme Hanover et al

Flammarion, £85
ISBN 978-2081513488

A lavish coffee-table book that looks into the history of flowers and gardens as direct inspiration for the famous French fashion brand Dior.

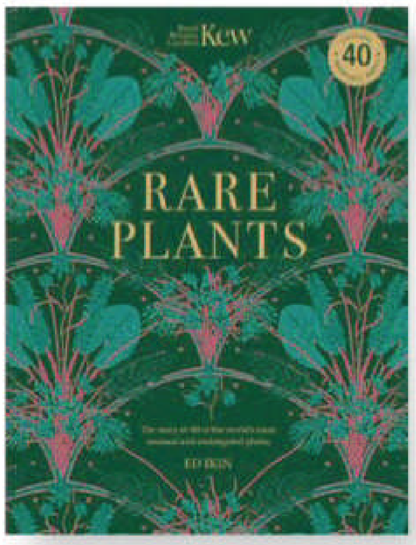
Katie Dutton is editorial assistant for Gardens Illustrated.

Gardens, and flowers more specifically, are an integral part of the heritage of haute couture brand Dior. They inspired its founder's New Look collection in 1947, with outfits reminiscent of the slim forms of tulips, the bends in the branches of the liana vine and the roundness of a flower's corolla. His first perfume, Miss Dior, also released in 1947, was named after his florist sister Catherine.

Dior was a self-proclaimed nature lover, once stating: 'I always feel more self-confident when I feel near to the soil.' After clothes, gardens were his greatest creations, and were a source of solace when the demands of cosmopolitan life became too great. *Dior in Bloom* aims to map out both the history of Dior's relationship with gardens and nature, and how these factors still inspire the fashion brand today. Chapters are written by an array of contributors, including the current creative team at Dior, and include plant profiles and stunning imagery of some of the brand's most botanical-inspired clothing. For beauty lovers, there's also a tantalising catalogue of the entire collection of Dior perfumes at the back of the book, with botanical notes and summaries for each one.

Perhaps the most enlightening chapter is written by landscape designer and horticultural therapist, Naomi Sachs, on the gardens throughout Dior's life. We learn about his childhood garden in Normandy; a rocky, cliff-facing garden that his mother redesigned into a lush, fragrant garden with 20 different types of rose. Here he allegedly created his first garden design aged ten; a pergola covered with plum trees and a pond filled with koi. Sachs traces three other gardens created by Dior, each symbolic of a change or shift in the designer's life. Dior was aware of the fickleness of fashion, and would eventually create a nest egg in the form of an agricultural garden in the South of France (his final garden) where he produced oil and wine to sell.

BOOK REVIEWS



RARE PLANTS: FORTY OF THE WORLD'S RAREST AND MOST ENDANGERED PLANTS

by Ed Ikin

Welbeck Publishing Group, £35
ISBN 978-0233006239

The story of 40 rare and endangered species told through exquisite botanical artworks sourced from the archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Reviewer Jonny Bruce is a plantsman and garden writer.

While the climate crisis is regularly discussed, it is often in generalities. The rainforest may be burning but the actual identity of plants – and their integral function to a particular ecosystem – is overlooked. This has led to a 'green blindness' where people struggle to 'see the trees for the wood' and relate to the species at risk.

In *Rare Plants*, Ed Ikin, deputy director of Kew's collection at Wakehurst Place, profiles 40 plants facing grave threats to their future survival.

Aided by sumptuous illustrations, Ikin brings each plant's peculiar character to the fore. The decision to rely on mostly historic illustrations is not purely aesthetic, it also speaks of important human associations. So many of these images were products of colonial expansion, and over-exploitation of species such as the Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*) is a key reason for their endangered status.

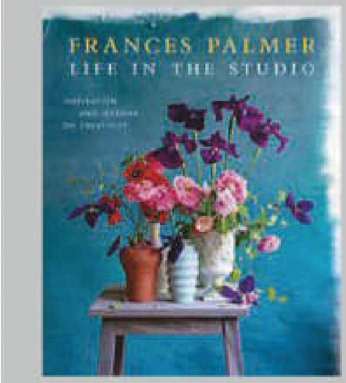
From the waterlilies of Rwanda's thermal springs to rare tropical orchids, this book identifies the perilous position of highly specialised, geographically isolated species. While tragic, it is not hard to imagine the risks faced by rare endemics such as the magnificent Chatham Island Christmas tree. What cuts deeper is the presence of familiar favourites – English oak, common ash and even snowdrops – on this list of existentially threatened plants.

Ikin does not shirk from the fact that the disproportionate impact of human beings on the environment is causing 'irrevocable harm'. But he also points to the positive human contributions and identifies how local communities can sometimes benefit, such as the sustainable harvesting of the desirable seed oil of Madagascar's renala trees.

Accompanied by a beautiful, if sombre, collection of 40 prints depicting each threatened species, *Rare Plants* is a visual feast but informative enough to engage the reader with the fragility of this planet's cherished biodiversity.

Other books

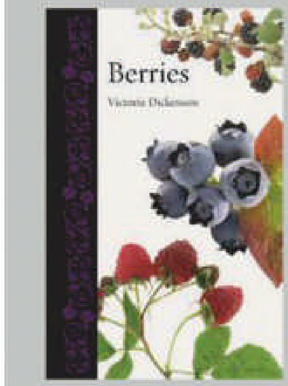
From lessons in floriculture to investigating declining butterfly numbers, here's the best-of-the-rest titles to read this month.



LIFE IN THE STUDIO

by Frances Palmer
Artisan, £27.99
ISBN 978-1579659059

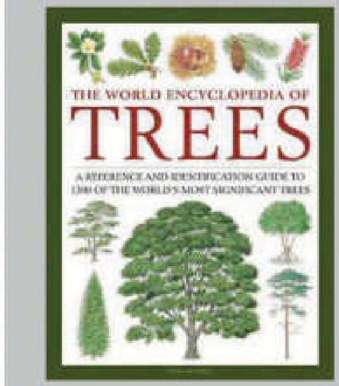
Potter Frances Palmer distills the lessons she has learned in the studio and cutting garden into a visual feast and stunning manual for current and aspiring creatives.



BERRIES

by Victoria Dickenson
Reaktion, £16
ISBN 978-1789141931

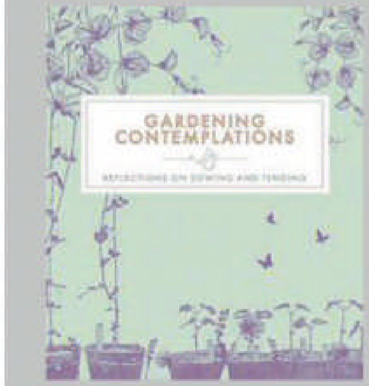
Victoria Dickenson traces the humble berry's journey across cultures and through the centuries with humour and passion.



THE WORLD ENCYCLOPEDIA OF TREES

by Tony Russell
Armadillo Books, £20
ISBN 978-0754834755

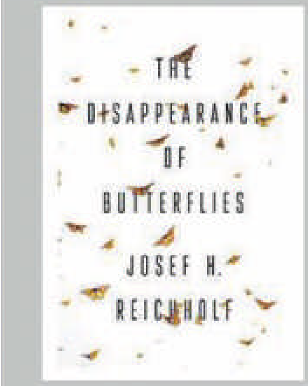
A reference guide to more than 1,300 of the most spectacular, best-loved and unusual trees found across the globe.



GARDENING CONTEMPLATIONS

Trigger Publishing, £9.99
ISBN 9781789562071

A compilation of quotes, poems and passages on the importance of contemplative reflection – all inspired by the art of floriculture.



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF BUTTERFLIES

by Josef H Reichholf, translated by Gwen Clayton
Polity, £25
ISBN 978-1509539796

The eminent German entomologist on one of the great environmental catastrophes of our time.

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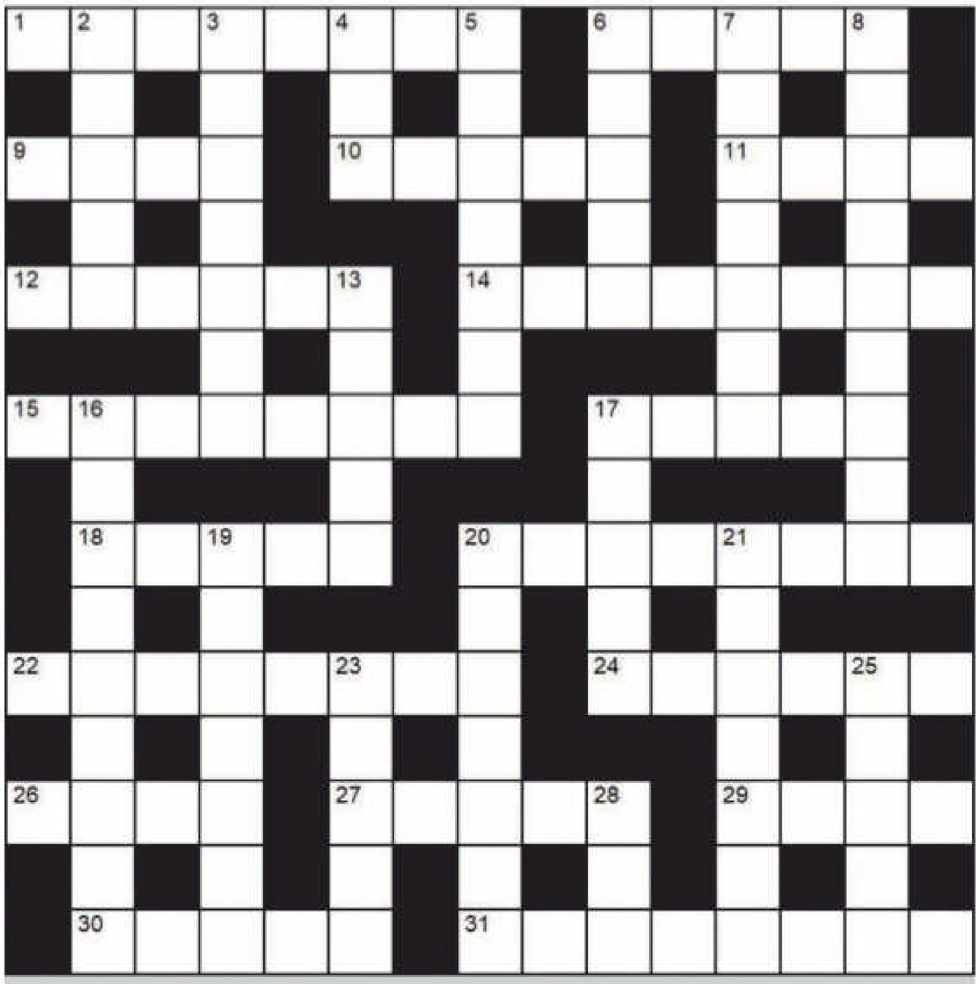
30 of the most influential people in gardening

Christopher Woodward, director of the Garden Museum, picks 30 of the most vibrant and exciting voices in gardening today

By Christopher Woodward

Crossword



ACROSS

1 *Physostegia virginiana*, aka ____ plant: I'd bet one changed (8)
6 Move plant to a larger container (5)
9 Shape of an honesty seedpod – floppy or compact? (4)
10 Remove unwanted insects… from inside bugle (5)
11/20 *Glebionis segetum* – comprised of cereal plant and calendula! (4,8)
12 Hardy companion for a bay tree? (6)
14 A 'prayer' plant… partly tropical at heart (8)
15 Leadwort genus gives plantsman, initially, rheumatic back pain (8)
17 The cockscomb plant (*Celosia*) has a plumed ___ (5)
18 Succulent fruit… to follow goose? (5)
20 See 11 across
22 Colourful climber, often with fluffy autumn seedheads (8)
24 A bright-orange echinacea (coneflower) – just before dusk (6)
26 *Erica arborea* is the ___ heath (4)
27 Part of fuchsia flower hanging beneath sepals – it can be worn (5)
29 A fiery red Italian chilli… liable to erupt! (4)
30 Yucca relative with formidable spines – a veg, possibly, includes one (5)
31 Family of edible and ornamental plants – held in catamaran, thus (8)

DOWN

2 Genus of 'quaking grass' – awfully bizarre, er, removed (5)
3 Species of rhododendron with scented white flowers – 'Propriety'? (7)
4 Conclude… it's part of garden design (3)
5 Product obtained from *Nicotiana* leaves (7)
6 Descriptive of *Osmunda* Royal Fern? – awfully large! (5)
7 Term for flowers with petals edged in contrasting colour (7)
8 *Potentilla erecta*'s common name: possibly 'Triton Elm' (9)
13 Covered in foliage (5)
16 Genus of Sweet alyssum – transformed Lao burial (9)
17 Makes James Grieve heartless? (5)
19 Poppy relative with large white flowers – any more unusual? (7)
20 A lavender-pink penstemon cultivar – psychic has one! (7)
21 ____ *manicata* commonly called 'giant rhubarb' (7)
23 Flavour… in genista stems (5)
25 ___ Pagels, German plant breeder (died 2007) – frightfully stern (5)
28 Refreshing drink made from *Camellia sinensis* (3)

• **Solutions to this issue's crossword will be printed in the December issue**

SOLUTIONS TO THE OCTOBER ISSUE'S CROSSWORD

Across 1 Cucumis **5** Aurora **8** Snip **9** Swede **10/2** Kingcup **13** Snowdrop **14** Coppice **16** Eiffel **18** Yarrow **20** Gnarled **22** Passion **25** Abelia **27** Edge **28** Earth **29** Plum **30** Caltha **31** Hastata.

Down 1 Conic **3** Muscari **4** Seeds **5** Anemone **6** Raked **7** Run to seed **12** Caper **14** Craspedia **15** Egg **17/11** False acacia **19** Weigela **21** Agathis **23/29** Sweet pea **24** Norah **26** Inula.

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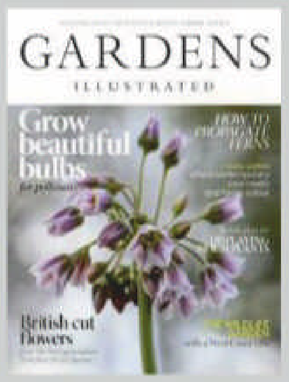

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READER OFFER

15% off houseplants at crocus.co.uk*

You don't have to stop growing plants just because winter is approaching. Houseplants can be enjoyed year round and ensure that you always have something green to nurture, and can envelope your home in that sense of lushness. The current popularity for houseplants means that there are plenty of interesting and varied plants to choose from, both in terms of look and also suitability for any room in the house. Plus, for inspiration, don't forget to read our columnist Jane Perrone on her choice of the best houseplants to grow (page 114) and our series on stylish way to create houseplant displays (page 82).

Online plant nursery Crocus is offering *Gardens Illustrated* readers a 15 per cent discount applied across its range of houseplants, giving you access to a great range of plants – all delivered direct to your door.

READER OFFER

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crocus.co.uk supply plants, seeds, bulbs and gardening accessories. To see the full range go to **crocus.co.uk**.

Offer ends 9 December 2020.

*** TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

Offer valid for UK customers only for houseplants only at crocus.co.uk. All plants are subject to availability. Offer excludes other plants, products and machinery as well as gift vouchers and delivery. Discount cannot be used with any other offer. Code can only be used once per customer. Orders must be made before 11.59pm on 9 December 2020.

crocus

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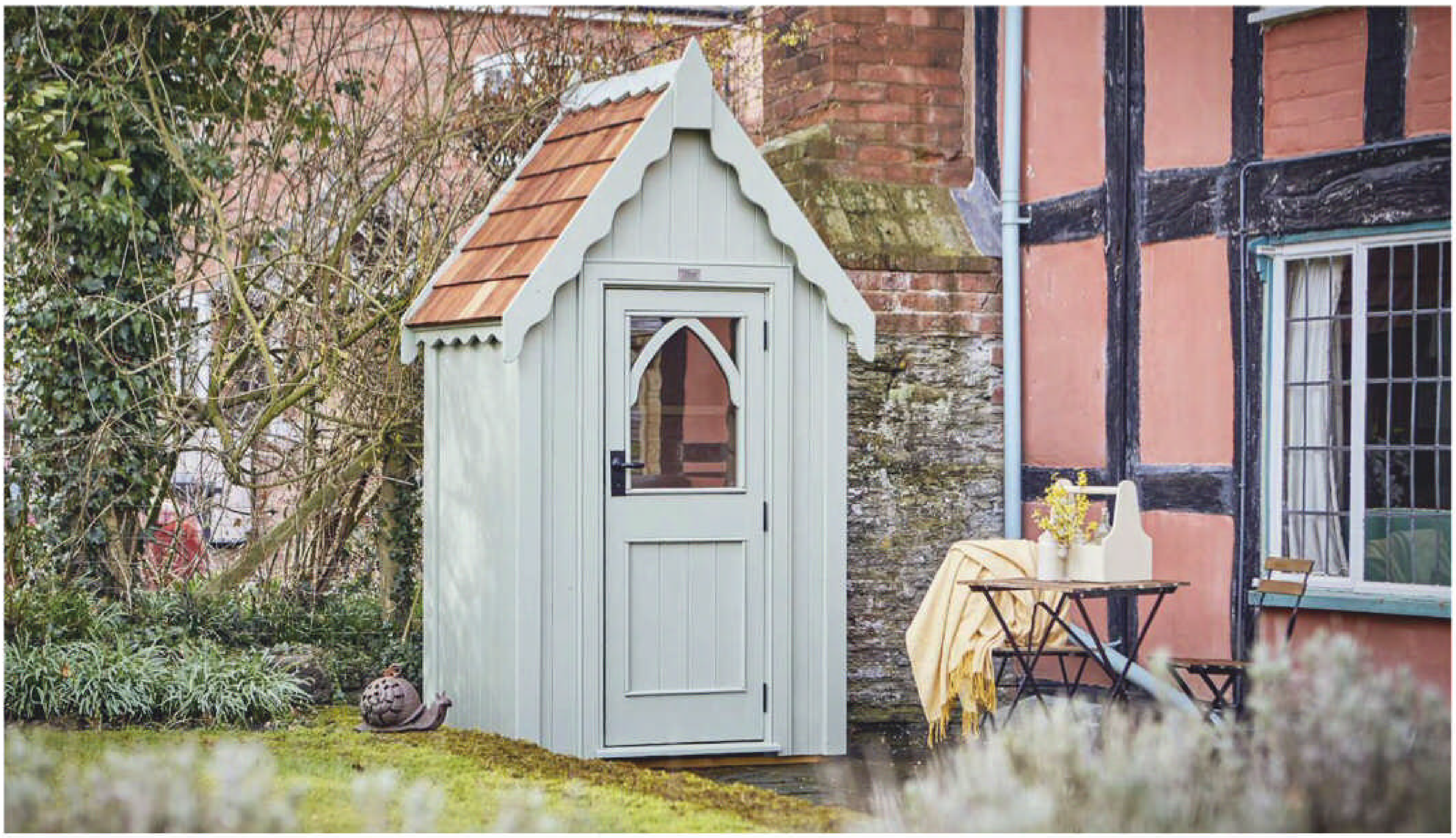
READER COMPETITION

WIN a shed from The Posh Shed Company – worth £1,820*



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*Details relate specifically to the prize shed. All The Posh Shed Company sheds are available for purchase in three build options (Posh, Very Posh and Unbelievably Posh) and three roof options.

For the full range of sheds and build options go to **theposhshedcompany.co.uk**

Features of the prize Ludlow shed*

Size 1.3m wide x 0.97m long.

Wood Pressure treated redwood.

Roof Cedar shingles.

Colour Unpainted, treated timber.

COMPETITION

We have one Ludlow shed to give away. For your chance to win go to **gardensillustrated.com/shedcompetition** and complete your entry. You'll need to answer the following question:

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a) Lincolnshire
b) Suffolk
c) Herefordshire

Competition closes 8 December 2020.

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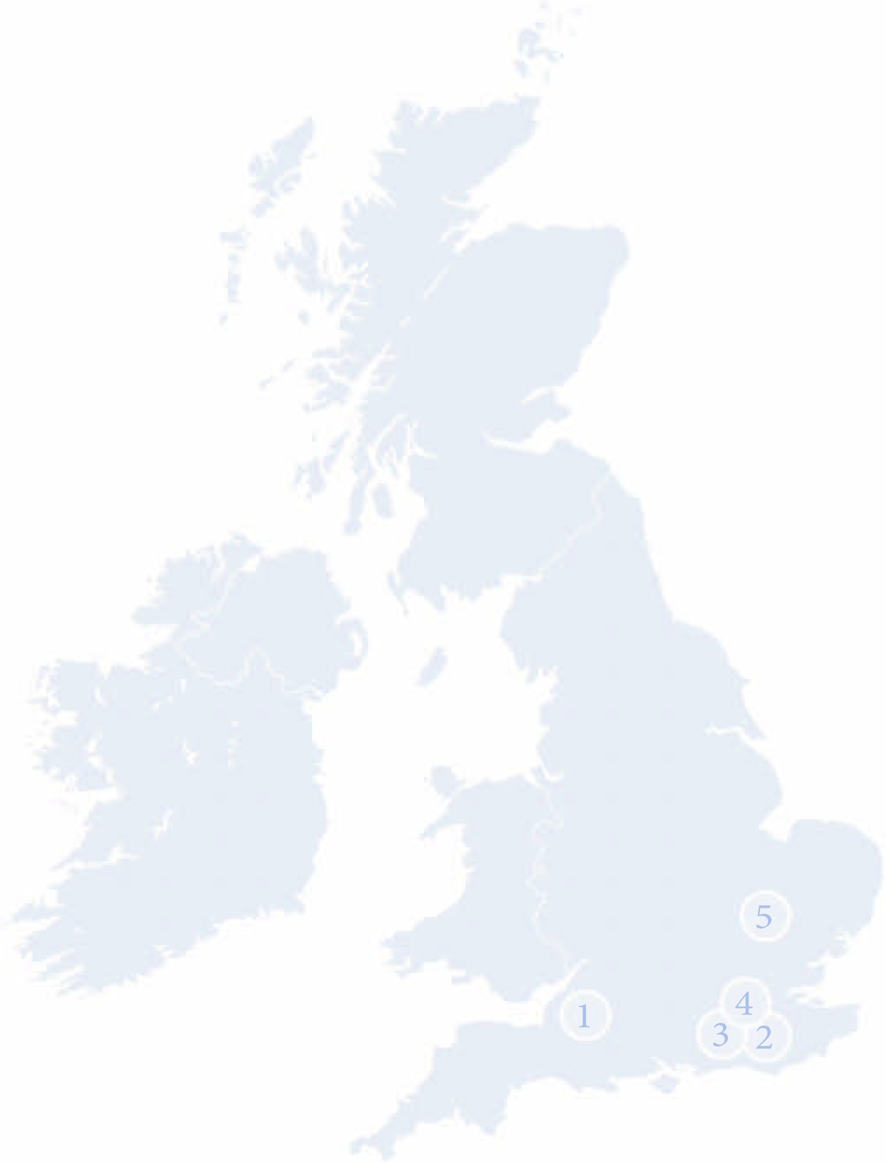

1 THE BISHOP'S PALACE & GARDENS

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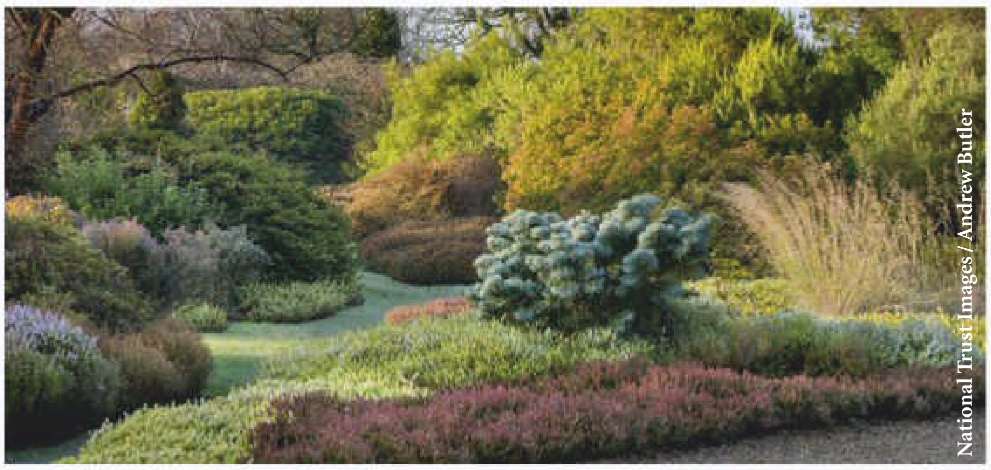
Wells, Somerset BA5 2PD | bishopspalace.org.uk

2 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Walk off the Christmas pudding in the gardens, where the warm bark of the redwood trees glows against the winter sky. Towards the castle the yew topiary stands majestically and the Winter Garden displays attractive colours and structures. For the more energetic take a bracing walk around the lake.

Nr. Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7NG | 01732 865224 | hevercastle.co.uk

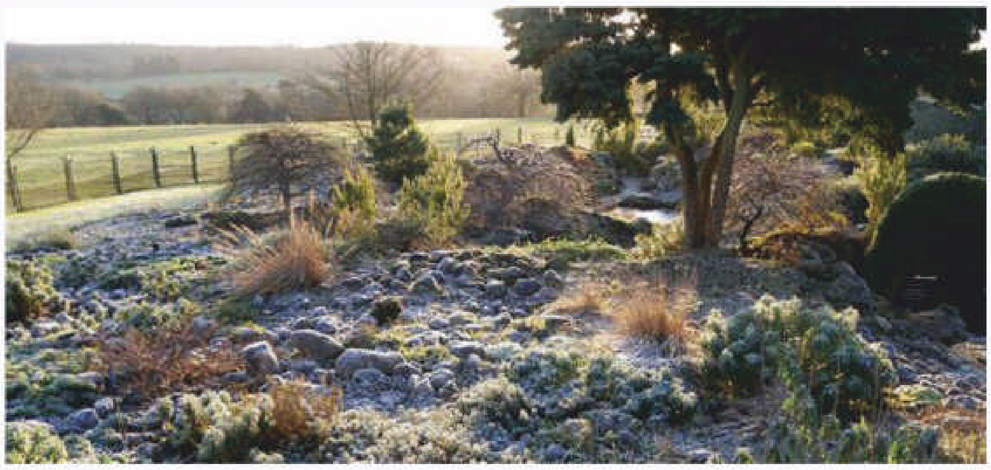


National Trust Images / Andrew Butler

3 NATIONAL TRUST, NYMANS

Brighten long winter days with a stroll along Winter Walk, lined with winter-flowering shrubs and berries, textured bark and luminous stems. Indulge the senses with beautifully scented daphnes and hamamelis flowers, subtly coloured and strongly perfumed. In midwinter spot snowdrops and cornus.

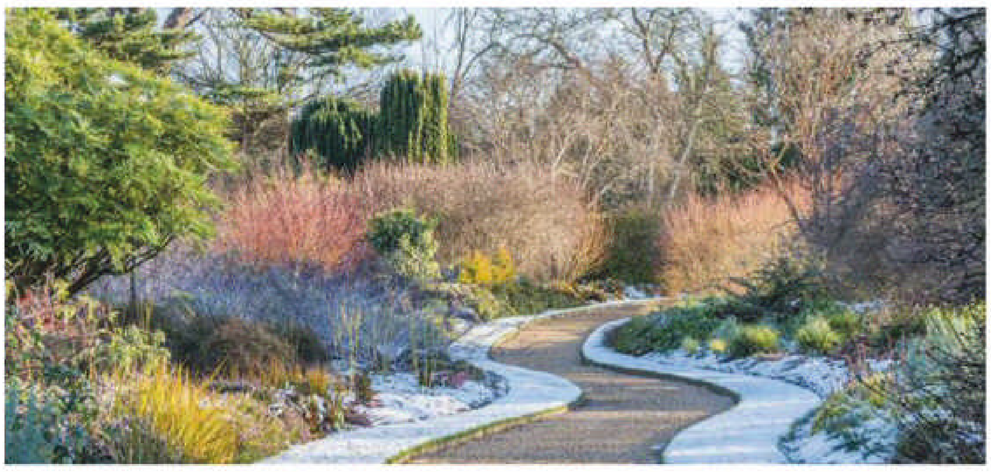
West Sussex RH17 6EB | 01444 405254 | nymans@nationaltrust.org.uk



4 EMMETTS GARDEN, NATIONAL TRUST

The views from the garden alone are well worth making a visit for, more and more viewpoints open up over the winter months creating better vistas across the Weald of Kent and beyond. Wander through to the south garden full of exotic and rare trees and shrubs from across the globe.

Ide Hill, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 6BA | 01732 868381 | nationaltrust.org.uk



5 CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDEN'S WINTER GARDEN

Flowers, foliage, stems, structure and scent combine to provide winter interest from December to March. 'It teaches gardeners new lessons and it delights those who simply want a bright walk on a clear winter day.' Robin Lane Fox, *Financial Times*. Entry with pre-booked tickets via website.

Cambridge CB2 1JE | enquiries@botanic.cam.ac.uk | botanic.cam.ac.uk

Nursery guide

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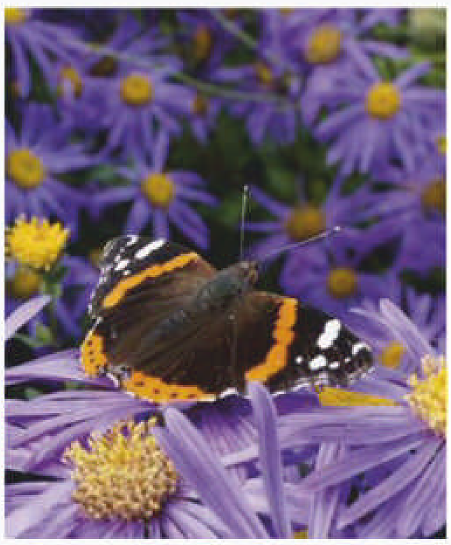

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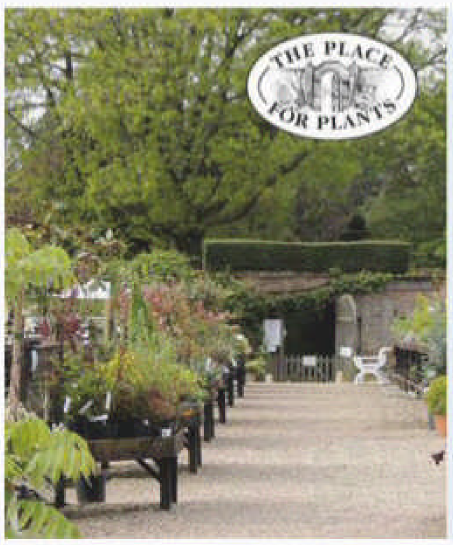

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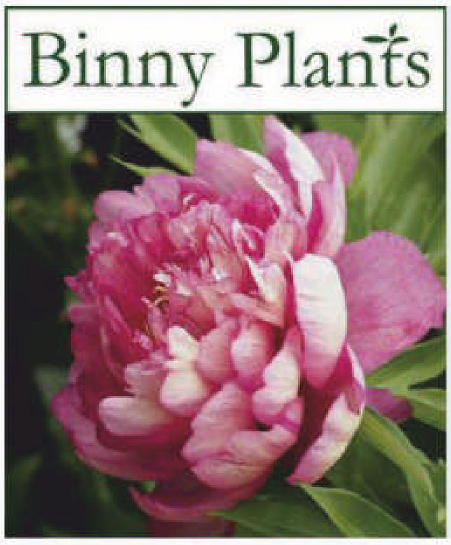

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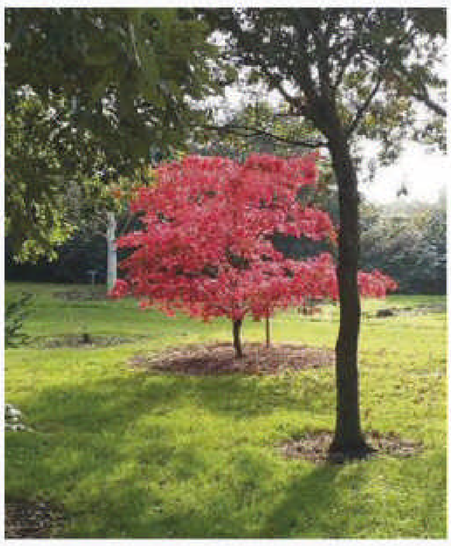

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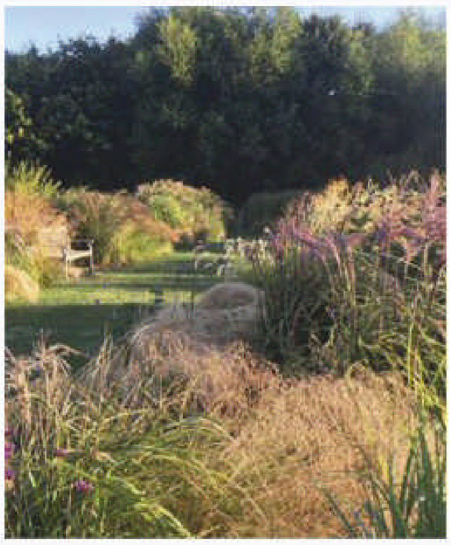

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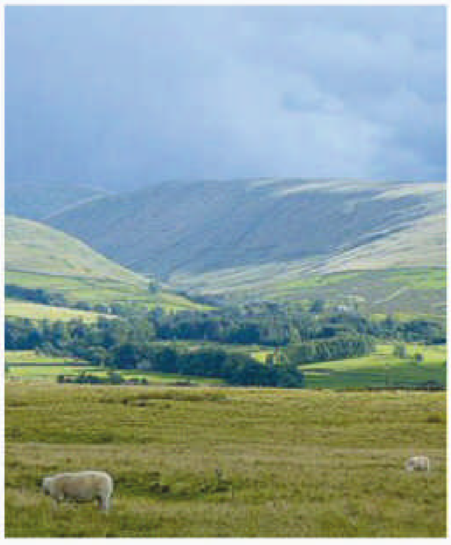

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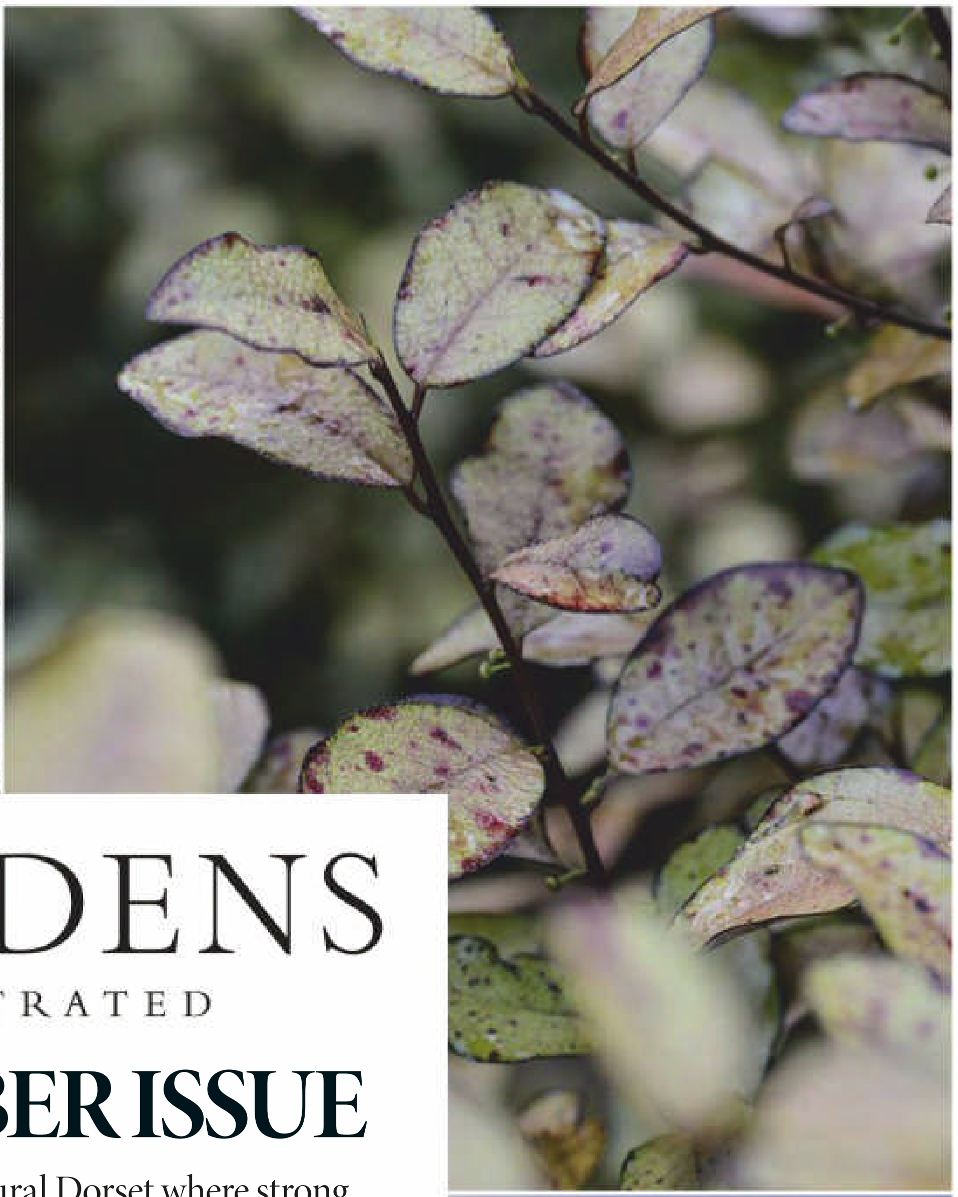

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- The best plants for a midwinter garden
- Discover the private garden hidden in Scotland's foremost contemporary sculpture park and art gallery
- The bright winter berries of *Cotoneaster*
- Sparkling Christmas gifts to delight gardeners
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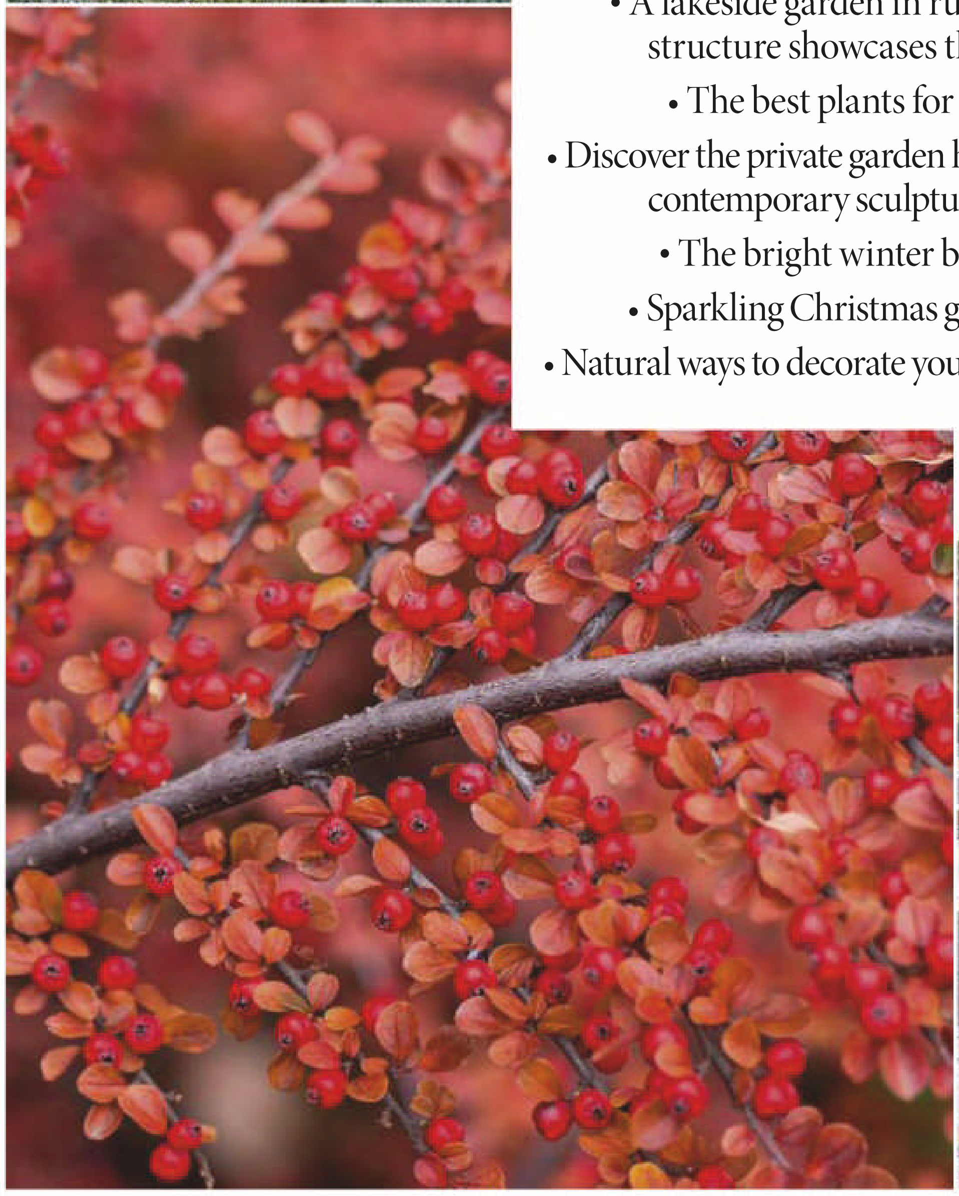

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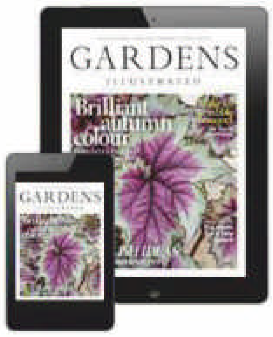

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HOUSEPLANTS

Philodendron

A genus of trailing houseplants that is often in search of a little support

WORDS **JANE PERRONE** ILLUSTRATION **PATRICK MORGAN**

The main stumbling block when it comes to turning your home into an indoor jungle is the distinct lack of trees. This may sound ridiculous, but think about it – many of the houseplants we love to grow are epiphytes, which live above ground, anchored in the nooks and crannies of trunks and branches. Epiphytes make good houseplants because they are adapted to coping with a limited root run and a patchy water supply, but like a toddler at a park, they need something to clamber over.

The name *Philodendron* translates to tree lover, so it's perhaps not surprising that many species will sulk and refuse to grow if left to hang. (There are always exceptions of course: the so-called self-heading species such as *Philodendron erubescens* 'Imperial Red' stay shrubby and don't need support.) The most commonly available epiphytic species is probably *Philodendron hederaceum*, with its velvety, heart-shaped leaves: the cultivar 'Brasil' is particularly striking, with a central lime-green flash. (Be warned when reading *Philodendron* labels: like many genera within the aroid family, philodendrons have been prone to much taxonomic juggling: *P. hederaceum* var. *oxycardium* is sometimes sold simply as *P. oxycardium* while *hederaceum* var. *hederaceum* may be sold as *P. micans* or *P. scandens*.)

The black-gold philodendron, *Philodendron melanochrysum*, is my favourite species, with its elongated dark olive-green leaves that look like velvet shields, decorated with pale-gold venation. Like other members of the aroid family, rarer philodendrons are undergoing a huge spike in popularity – and therefore prices – this year. The current poster plants of the genus, such as *Philodendron* 'Pink Princess' with its dark green leaves marked by candy pink splashes, can sell for hundreds of pounds. But beware: this kind of variegation is inherently unstable, so some plants will lose all the pink patterning for which they are prized.

Even when variegation is stable, you may find that the *Philodendron* species in a small pot in your home bears little resemblance to the monster leaves on display in tropical glasshouses. That is because *Philodendron* foliage undergoes dramatic changes as the plant ages, often changing size, shape and texture: *P. melanochrysum* leaves may start off a few centimetres long, but can reach a metre long once mature.

Assuming you don't have a tree to hand, support for vining philodendrons can be provided in the form of moss poles, wire trellis or obelisks. Moss poles (also known as moss sticks or totems) tend to offer the best results, because they most closely mimic the rough surface of a tree and provide anchorage for the aerial roots philodendrons produce. They can be bought from most garden centres: despite the name, these poles often consist of plastic tubes covered in coir matting. If you can, make your own using 1cm-gauge plastic netting secured to a cylinder shape with cable ties and filled with sphagnum moss; a small terracotta pot (known as a 'dew pot') stuck in the top and kept filled with water will ensure the moss stays damp. Alternatively, track down your local exotic pet shop and you'll find a supply of pieces of cork and other natural wood such as pieces of grapevine that you can train vines up and along.

To get the best out of your philodendrons, it's worth thinking about the kind of soil they'd be used to in the wild: free-draining and high in organic material. Every grower has their own formula for success, but start with a base of houseplant compost (I use peat-free Melcourt Sylvagrow) and add some fine orchid bark, perlite, vermiculite, leca (expanded clay pebbles) or charcoal to make up a total of around 40 to 50 per cent of the total volume. That way you can water generously during the growing season without fear of waterlogging the roots: ease off a little during the winter, but never allow the compost to dry out completely. When it comes to light, philodendrons won't be happy in the darkest recesses of your room – a few metres away from a south-facing window, or closer to an east or east-facing window is ideal. Before you know it, your indoor jungle will be complete.

These aerial roots make air layering propagation dead easy. Pre-dampened, coir compost or sphagnum moss packed around a node (the point where the leaf petiole joins the stem) and wrapped in a clear plastic bag or cling film, and secured with twine, will within weeks produce a mass of roots: once roots are around 10cm long, the section of stem can be cut away to make a new plant. □

Jane Perrone is a garden writer

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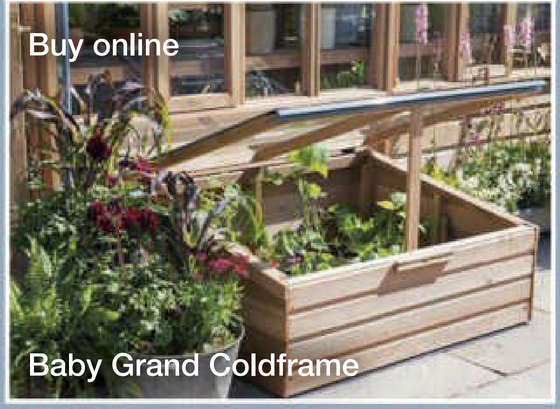
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